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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

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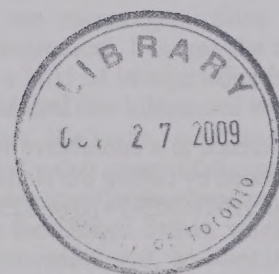
Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Thursday 22 October 2009

Jeudi 22 octobre 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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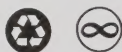
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 22 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 22 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

INTERPROVINCIAL POLICING ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 SUR LES SERVICES POLICIERS INTERPROVINCIAUX

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 8, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 203, An Act to allow for better cross-border policing co-operation with other Canadian provinces and territories and to make consequential amendments to the Police Services Act / *Projet de loi 203, Loi visant à permettre une meilleure coopération avec les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada en ce qui concerne les services policiers transfrontaliers et à apporter des modifications corrélatives à la Loi sur les services policiers.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: I want to preface the remarks I'm going to make to the House by stating that I will be supporting the bill. We hope that it is sent to committee. We have some thoughts and potential amendments that will strengthen the bill.

Having said that, though, I do want to make the following comments: We support this bill, as I said, but we support it understanding that it's not going to solve all the problems of policing. There are already four jurisdictions in Canada that have come along and done a similar bill—those being Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Nova Scotia and New Brunswick. We are joining a growing family. This is not a precedent-setting bill. Ontario is not the first to do this but, in fact, if it passes and if it goes through committee and becomes law, we may be the fifth province.

There are some difficulties with this, because only five provinces are on board, Ontario being the largest and most populous province. It would, I think, behoove us to encourage the other provinces. That's the first thing I want to say. We need to encourage the other provinces to do the same, especially Quebec, because the problem of

interprovincial policing, the problem of criminality between Canada's two most populous provinces—being Ontario and Quebec—is something that needs to be explored, and we need to have a reciprocal agreement with Quebec.

It's all well and good to have a reciprocal agreement with Manitoba, which is also a sister and bordering province, but the others are separated from us. It's difficult to envisage, other than if the criminality takes place by air, the transfer of goods, the transfer of services, the transfer of illegal contraband—all of those things generally will take place, and we know that, either by automobile, by truck, by bus, potentially by waterway, and we need to work with our neighbouring jurisdictions especially. So it's important that Quebec be brought on board. It's important, if we are truly to be a Canadian family, that all 10 provinces and three territories be brought on board as well. As I said, Manitoba has done this, and that whole section of northwestern Ontario is likely going to be that portion of the province where the reciprocal agreement at this point will do the most good.

We also share a border, although it's a very small one, with Nunavut—one of the islands in James Bay—in proximity to the northern cities of Attawapiskat and Peawanuck. I'm trying to think of them all here; anyway, those two at least. There is some potential there, although I must state, given the number of people who live in those locations, it will be of course minimal.

There is also the second problem which is not addressed by this bill—and I don't blame the bill because there's nothing that the bill can encourage. I think we need to talk to the federal government, because the real need, in my view, of having a kind of interjurisdictional boundary, even if it's only within a few kilometres of the border, is with the United States. We know—and the federal government knows as well—that many of the problems plaguing our law enforcement officials, plaguing the polity of Ontario, come from the United States, whether that be the smuggling of illegal contraband, whether it be the smuggling of guns and weapons, whether it be the drugs which often cross the borders both ways. That is, to my mind, every bit as important and probably more important than what we are trying to do with the other provinces.

We need to have a kind of agreement and a beefed-up border where the security and the people can go back and forth. The criminals certainly know no boundaries. It is a worldwide phenomenon; you can get literally almost anywhere in the world from here in Toronto in one day, almost literally anywhere—by plane, by high-speed

transit, transportation. You can get there, and the criminals can get there too. In order to stop the flow of illegal contraband and drugs and guns and human smuggling—I don't want to forget that one—then we need to make sure that the borders as well have a kind of rapprochement. I'm suggesting that if we pass this bill, this will give additional ammunition for the Premier, as the Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs, to go to his counterparts in Canada at a Premiers' conference and talk about expanding this. We need to do everything we can to protect our society from those evils which often come from other jurisdictions.

Now, we share the longest undefended border in the world with the United States, and of course the smuggling of our other neighbour, I guess, the former Soviet Union, now Russia—I imagine not much transpires over the North Pole. And I haven't really heard of all that many difficulties coming out of our other neighbour, which is France, from St-Pierre and Miquelon. I think we need to take a really hard look at the American-Canadian border and what takes place here. It is that international concern that I wanted to bring forward.

0910

So, in a nutshell, I'm supporting the bill. I am saying, in supporting the bill, two things have to happen: We have to get the other five provinces and the other three territories on board, so that it is all one seamless ability for police officers to come into other jurisdictions and do the necessary studies, do the necessary enforcement, work in co-operation with Ontario police officials; and the second one is to send that same message to the federal government, that the border, which I believe should remain undefended and free, does require a beefed-up police presence so that a criminal—a person who is intent on harming the people of Ontario through whatever their criminal activity is—cannot simply come from the United States or flee back to the United States without us being able to do what is necessary in conjunction with American officials.

With those two provisos, which I think will give this bill the ammunition to go forward, I would support the bill and send it to committee. I'm sure that my colleague Mr. Kormos, the member from Welland, will have much more to say when he returns. With that, I'll conclude my remarks.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I was indeed buoyed by the comments of the member from Beaches–East York, so what I'm going to do is try to address the issues he brought up.

During the debate, and having carriage of the bill, I made it clear that yes, indeed, we will be going to committee; yes, indeed, we will continue to hear from stakeholders; and yes, indeed, we will be working with Quebec. Quebec is already in the process of their piece of legislation, which we'll probably see, if not before the end of the year, then at the beginning of next year. That was a result of an agreement that was signed during the Quebec-Ontario cabinet meetings that took place, with some of the issues that came to light.

The member was also correct in the approach he took, in that he characterized it as a piece of the puzzle. I've been saying from the very beginning that it's not the be-all and end-all. Some people may stand up and say, "It doesn't do this and this and this," instead of saying, "Yes, this is a piece of the puzzle," and it's an important piece of the puzzle, because this is being asked for by our stakeholders, who need to go in there day in and day out, and we want to support them. But indeed it is valid to bring up the other questions you ask. Yes, there are conversations going on with the federal government to ensure that they're having the same kinds of discussions we are talking about between provinces. We want that to happen state to state.

I thought the other piece you mentioned, in terms of Nunavut, was an interesting challenge. What my research indicated to me is that inside of this legislation does not remove or legislate the RCMP, which has jurisdiction across the country. The RCMP can act here, can act in Quebec and can act in Nunavut, and Nunavut reciprocates here in terms of the RCMP officers. They're already signalled to do that.

The three areas this bill does capture, which it does and doesn't do—that is, the three areas we need to hear about—are fresh pursuit. It does not impinge on fresh pursuit. If there's a Criminal Code violation happening, the fresh pursuit legislation across borders is still in effect. The other things this affects and helps, which are part of the puzzle you spoke of, are large events, like the Olympics, and criminal investigations, which is the on-going going after the bad guy.

This doesn't necessarily make it the be-all and end-all, but it helps with the seamless part we're trying to create to give us the advantage over the bad guys. That's the important part that I think we've covered. The member was right to ask whether or not these things would be in place to help us do that. I appreciate the member's support, and I suggest to him very respectfully that we have samples and examples that I'd definitely share with him, as I said I would share them with other members of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Beaches–East York has up to two minute for his response.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you to the member from Brant for his discussion. Maybe I should have talked a little bit about the RCMP; you did raise this issue, and I think it's an important one. The RCMP does have jurisdiction across all of Canada, save and except that the two places where their powers are lessened are Ontario and Quebec, because we have the Ontario Provincial Police and they have the Quebec provincial police. The other provinces have agreed to utilize the services of the RCMP and continue to, as do the territories.

I think that's perhaps the difficulty in the perspective I was coming from, and I do acknowledge that the RCMP can go from one jurisdiction to another. But Canada's two most populous provinces, Ontario and Quebec, have

their own provincial police forces, and there is, and has traditionally been, some little bit of tension inviting the RCMP. In Ontario and Quebec, the RCMP is largely relegated to federal issues. So you will see them around issues of drugs, and you will see them around issues of immigration and human smuggling, but you won't see them in a lot of things like corporate fraud and other transborder and transnational issues.

I thank the member for what he said—he is correct—and for the comments he made. He is right: It is but one piece of the puzzle, and Ontario needs to be part of that puzzle. We need to be that key piece that's put into place so that others can join and the puzzle can be completed.

Having said that, I thank you, Mr. Speaker, and thank the member from Brant for his comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. You look surprised. Did you think your day was over? Sorry.

Anyway, it's a pleasure to speak to Bill 203 this morning. I must say that, in a substantive way, we support this legislation, but I see this so many times in the way that we bring bills to the House, and I sometimes wonder why we do it this way. A bill is given unanimous consent on first reading, you get no input from stakeholders—you have to debate the bill without any input from stakeholders—then, if it passes second reading, you take it to committee, and then, and only then, do you actually hear in a substantive way from the people who are most affected by the bill. So I sometimes think we've got it in reverse in this chamber—maybe not so much on this bill, because the stakeholders are either cops or criminals, and quite frankly, we'll favour the cops every time.

But we are certainly starting to get dribbles of some concerns being raised with respect to some of the details of the legislation, which we haven't heard much about because, of course, those things are sometimes not covered in a very detailed way in the bill. But the premise that is being sought—or the result that is being generally sought by this bill—is something we obviously support: allowing police more freedom to pursue criminals in another jurisdiction, crossing the border in the act of their duties.

One thing that we do need some answers on is, who's going to be paying the bill? Is it going to be the police force where the crime was originally witnessed or whatever—reported? Once they pursue them into another jurisdiction, whose property do they become? Do they become the property of the jurisdiction that has apprehended them or the property of the jurisdiction where the crime was committed? We don't want to have turf wars going on in those situations as well. One of the questions will be, of course, who's going to be paying the bill? Because police costs are not free, as we know.

So there are a number of things that we want to deal with when we get to committee—and also have a better chance of having these discussions with the various

police services that are going to be affected by this and get their input as well.

I know my friend from Beaches–East York, as well as the member from Brant, talked about this. We do hear that there are some issues with the RCMP with respect to the Manitoba border, because they don't have a provincial police force in Manitoba; the RCMP is the one that looks after the policing for that jurisdiction. So there are some issues there as well that I think need to be addressed.

We're hoping that when we get to committee and have a chance to meet with stakeholders, we can have some of these things clarified. Other than that, I think we most certainly will be supporting this bill and hoping that we can make it better when it does get to committee.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: A brief comment: I want to let you know that the member is correct that there has been very little response from individuals or organizations to this point, but I can tell you that I met recently with the Ontario Association of Police Services Boards, and they are one group that is looking forward to committee hearings. They do have some concerns around who pays for what. Some clarification is required and maybe even some amendments to the bill. So I'm actually glad he brought that up this morning, because the fact is that they're looking forward to the hearings as soon as possible.

Now, I haven't had any idea when those hearings might be. I don't think we've had any kind of subcommittee meeting to determine any dates etc. I look forward to attending those meetings and getting on with this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: Again, to the members for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and Simcoe North: Thank you for the support. I think that everyone in this House from all the parties has indicated they are going to be supportive of the bill, with some questions needing to be answered.

And yes, to reinforce again, there will be some hearings and committee work done on this, and for the stakeholders plus anyone else—which is the tradition of this place, that we've reinforced—this will be open to concerns and issues and appropriate amendments. My intention is to always guide this with care to ensure that amendments offered are going to strengthen and improve the bill.

To give you just a short example, in response to one of the NDP members—and I can't remember who it was—I did make an undertaking to find this answer. He wanted to know specific examples. I was in touch with Chief Armand La Barge from York regional, and he said that in the past, York officers have found themselves working outside of Ontario and noted as an example a recent investigation of the theft of a Garda Armoured Car Services vehicle in Richmond Hill. The scope of the investigation eventually widened to Quebec and led to York officers working with the Sûreté du Québec, which means

that this type of legislation would have fast tracked that capacity for the police services to do exactly what this bill is intended to do—and that is to offer that cross border, and Quebec is that piece.

Let's not get too wrapped up on the RCMP issue. The RCMP issue is germane to whether or not there is a jurisdictional, territorial kind of bragging rights piece here. The bad guys are the focus, and I'm glad everyone has stayed focused on that point. This is about legislation to ensure the good guys work together to get the bad guys. It sounds kind of juvenile to say it that way, but we will be using and hearing from the stakeholders, and we will get better legislation as a result of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments? Seeing none, the honourable member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Thank you very much, and I appreciate the response from the member from Brant.

You know, as we've said before, and not necessarily in the comments today, there's every reason to be proceeding with a bill of this nature. We know that police forces have been looking for this kind of assistance in allowing them to do their jobs better for some time now, so we have no reason to believe that this bill is not going to be helpful in some way.

The member responded to some of the concerns, and we appreciate that. We hope that, through the process of committee and public hearings and getting the feedback from those who may understand these things, quite frankly, better than the people who actually sit in this Legislature—because our job is not understanding, completely and perfectly, legislation; our job is to make decisions at the end of the day, whether that legislation will pass or not—we will have a better understanding of how this bill can affect police services and crime prevention and the apprehension of criminals across this country.

We look forward to that, and we appreciate the government's moves to bring this forward. I hope we can make this the best bill that it can possibly be by having a substantive and worthwhile committee process.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none we'll deal with the motion.

Mr. Bartolucci has moved second reading of Bill 203. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Shall the bill be ordered for third reading?

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'd ask that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy, please.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): So ordered. Orders of the day?

Hon. Brad Duguid: No further business, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): There being no further business for this morning, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we'll have question period.

The House recessed from 0924 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'm very pleased this morning to introduce Mr. Bill Cooke, who is the father of Kevin Cooke, who works in my office.

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to introduce a group that has come down from Burk's Falls to deliver 6,700 petitions here, and I think I have a complete list: Lisa Morrison; Bev Norrena; Jackie Brown; Bette Kitchen; Diane Rutgers; Francisca Bantten; Ken McIntyre; the reeve of Burk's Falls, Cathy Still; Kay Todd; Barbara Barry; Bev Graham; Gwen and Diana Banton; and Lisa Dickenson. I think there's a few others who aren't on my list. I'd like to welcome them to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to introduce Brenda and Bob Haynes, who are visiting from Port Colborne today. Welcome to them.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome to the Legislature guests from London, Ontario: Gary and Mary Margaret Kareen.

Mr. Paul Miller: I would like to introduce Mr. Greg Enright and the members of Glendale High School who are here today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Vaughn and page Matthew Grossi, we'd like to welcome his mother, Darlene, and his sister Natalie sitting in the east members' gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park today.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to beg the indulgence of the House for just a few minutes to allow me to respond to a concern raised on Tuesday by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills relating to the use of language in this chamber.

The member will know that the first requirement for the Speaker before calling any member to order for the use of unparliamentary language is that he has to have heard it. If he hears it, the Speaker then has to consider the context, tone and propensity to cause disorder of the language used. For this reason, words and phrases allowed in one instance may not be in another. That is why the Speakers refrain from ruling after the fact, even if a review of Hansard suggests that similar or identical language was used: Hansard cannot reveal the tone or reaction.

In the case at hand, the member from Newmarket–Aurora repeatedly employed the use of unparliamentary language while the minister was trying to answer. While I do try to exercise the greatest latitude during question period, in this instance I was left with little choice but to intervene.

Having said that, my review of Hansard did reveal that there were perhaps more instances of intemperate language from both sides of the House than is necessary. I

would therefore ask that all members heed my ruling delivered just this week and moderate their language. This should be of no impediment to conducting oneself honourably in the cut and thrust of question period.

ORAL QUESTIONS

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Premier. Why has the Premier been telling taxpayers that the Auditor General cleared him and Minister Smitherman of handing out millions in untendered contracts when the auditor has said no such thing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to return to a subject which is important to all of us and remains important to all of us, the auditor made some pretty clear findings, I thought, and offered some very specific and very helpful recommendations. We accept the findings, and we will adopt wholeheartedly the recommendations.

I think he said in particular that there was a lack of oversight. We accept that. I think he said that a lack of oversight and the breaking of rules “go together like a horse and carriage”; we accept responsibility for that. The single most important remedy we’ve already put in place is to ensure that we can no longer have sole-source contracts for our consultants. They must now be part of a competitive bidding process. That’s a very important step forward. That changes a rule, by the way, that had been in place under the previous government. We think it’s no longer appropriate, and there are other things that we’re doing as well to strengthen confidence in eHealth and all systems of government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: Nine different times since the auditor’s report on the eHealth scandal was released, the Premier has quoted the auditor in this House as having said party politics were not a factor in the sweetheart deals the McGuinty government made with Liberal-friendly consultants. But yesterday, when the auditor testified before the public accounts committee, he said, “We didn’t conduct a specific investigation with respect to this.” At the same meeting, the auditor said, “We didn’t do any research into who could be politically tied....” Why is the Premier telling taxpayers the auditor didn’t find proof of political ties when he knows the auditor wasn’t even looking for it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: That’s an important piece of new information, but I want to read you the rest of the quotation put forward by the auditor. He said, “All we’re saying is, we kept our eyes open; we didn’t see any evidence of it.” That’s what the auditor said. He didn’t see any evidence of party politics. I think that’s important.

I think that what’s important now is that we move forward. We’ve got the findings; we’ve got the recommendations; we know what to do. In fact, we have laid a strong foundation over at eHealth when it comes to put-

ting in place electronic health records for all Ontarians. There’s more work to be done and we are eager to keep moving ahead with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Premier’s entire defence against calling an inquiry has been this quote that he has distorted and lifted out of context from page 11 of the auditor’s report. But the auditor testified yesterday, and again I quote: “I wouldn’t want to say that our work would have been comprehensive enough to allow someone to conclude that on all ... contracts, without a doubt, we’re concluding that there definitely weren’t political ties.” It’s time the Premier put aside gamesmanship. Tell the whole truth to taxpayers. If the auditor himself says he wasn’t investigating political connections, then why won’t the Premier appoint a commission of inquiry that will do that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Just to repeat what was said in the original report, “We were aware of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.” He also said—again, I think it’s important to have the entire quotation used. The rest of that quotation is, “All we’re saying is, we kept our eyes open; we didn’t see any evidence of it.” Again, that’s the issue of party politics.

We think that we’ve got a very comprehensive report, comprehensive findings, intelligent recommendations. We accept them wholeheartedly and we will continue to move ahead.

GOVERNMENT’S RECORD

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Government Services, the minister who is now, under new legislation, the integrity czar for Canada’s worst government. Minister, in that role, ensuring integrity within government, are you concerned about the Premier telling taxpayers that the auditor investigated Liberal ties to the millions of dollars handed out by Minister Smitherman and Management Board when he did not conduct any such investigation?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am very proud of our government’s record. We have taken the right steps to move forward. Let me just talk about some of those steps.

Just recently, the Premier announced four steps to increase accountability to protect taxpayer dollars. We have introduced two-page summaries for travel, meal and hospitality expenses. All OPS employees, political staff, agencies and boards will receive mandatory computer-based training. Expenses of all senior OPS management, cabinet ministers, political staff and senior executives of 22 agencies will be posted online. That talks about the transparency that our government is committed to, and I’m very proud of the record that our government has on that front.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Speaker, like me, I'm sure you didn't hear an answer in that response.

When Sheila Fraser, the federal Auditor General, discovered that Alphonse Gagliano wasted 100 million taxpayer dollars, the federal Liberals referred the scandal to the ethics commissioner of the RCMP, then Justice Gomery. When Ontario's auditor found that Minister Smitherman and the Premier wasted a billion dollars, 10 times as much, the McGuinty Liberals tried to bury the scandal—no police investigation, no public inquiry.

Has the minister, our new integrity czar Takhar, at least contacted the Integrity Commissioner to investigate whether any friends of the Liberals were among those who got rich in this Liberal billion-dollar boondoggle?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Sometimes we need to look at the facts, and sometimes the facts speak louder than words. In 2001-02 the total consultant expenditures under the previous government were \$656 million, and we have consistently reduced that number to roughly \$360 million or \$370 million right now. That is a considerable decrease in consultant numbers. So if \$370 million is a big number for them, what about the \$656 million that they had in 2001-02? What do they say about that?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Still no answer.

The minister, integrity czar Takhar, is responsible for the Public Service of Ontario Act. As the only minister in Ontario history to be found in violation of the Members' Integrity Act, he knows first-hand that ministers have a duty to ensure ethical conduct in their political offices.

The Provincial Auditor has confirmed that his financial audit did not investigate political links between Minister Smitherman or the Premier and their former political aide. Has anyone looked into the ethics of Minister Smitherman's conduct in this billion-dollar scandal?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I will refer that question to the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yesterday, the auditor said, "I have seen that headline as well: Auditor Says a Billion Dollars Is Wasted." What did the auditor say? "That would be going too far. There is some value that is going to be realized. Certainly, on the infrastructure side, some of that money is going to turn out to benefit the taxpayers."

He also says, "One aspect of the strategic plan that we particularly welcomed was the robust and detailed ... activities to be conducted." It's "a major step forward in crystallizing the government's eHealth priorities and plans, and communicating these to stakeholders."

It's time to actually look at what has happened and stop the political playing that you're doing.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. For the past week, the Premier has told Ontario

families to brace themselves for cuts to their hospitals and health care, to schools and education, to job training programs. At the same time, he's telling them to pay more with a new tax on everything from home heating to hydro to the coffee in the morning. Why is the Premier asking people to pay more and expect less?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think there's a very important question that we need to answer together, and that question is being asked by the people of Ontario. These are people who understand that our world has changed somewhat dramatically, and this was something that had been taking place, had been in motion, before the recession got here. It's affecting our economy. It is changing significantly as a result of globalization and other things. And the question is, simply, what do we need to do to make ourselves stronger?

My friend does not have any answers for that. She believes in the status quo. She is a passionate champion and defender of the status quo.

There are certain things we have to do to make ourselves stronger, and one of those is to join 130 other countries that have already risen to the defence of their manufacturers so they can continue to hire more people in the manufacturing sector; that's to have a harmonized sales tax. We're doing that in a way, by the way, that protects our families by reducing their taxes, and we have in place other mitigation strategies as well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, there's nothing more status quo than kicking the little guy and giving corporate tax cuts in your budgets. That's the status quo. While the Premier is telling Ontario families that the cupboard is bare, he's telling the business sector to belly up to an all-you-can-eat buffet. Not only does his harmonization scheme provide \$5 billion in no-strings-attached tax cuts to business, but he's planning to spend an additional half-billion dollars on another corporate tax giveaway next year. Will the Premier consider delaying these giveaways, or is it only Ontario families who have to pay more and get less?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate my friend's interesting perspective on these things, but let's listen to Pat Capponi, 25 in 5: Network for Poverty Reduction. This is her quote: "This budget has moved the bar forward on housing, tax credits and child benefits in ways that will make a tangible difference in the lives of many Ontarians."

I know that my honourable colleague would like to say that somehow we are on one side or the other. The fact of the matter is, we're doing both. We are trying to ensure that we have a strong economy by making sure our businesses can compete. At the same time, we're looking after our families, particularly our most vulnerable.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In 2001, the current Minister of Finance asked the government of the day the following question: "Can you tell Ontario's families how the \$2.2

billion corporate tax cut will benefit our frail and elderly neighbours who are in your care?" Yet today, it's the Premier of this province who's telling seniors not only to expect cuts but to shoulder more of the tax burden so he can fund the no-strings-attached business tax cuts that he used to oppose. If the Premier is serious about restraint, why does he only expect it from some?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've never once heard the honourable member stand up here and say, "Ninety-three per cent of Ontarians will get a permanent tax cut." I would encourage her to reconcile herself to that reality, because that too is part of our budget. The average family with an \$80,000 income will see a permanent 10% tax cut. The first \$36,000 of income will see a 17% tax cut. Ninety thousand more Ontarians will no longer pay any personal income tax. That's the kind of balance that we're bringing through our budget. That's why we have food banks supporting our budget. That's why we have poverty groups supporting our budget.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This Premier knows very well that for every dollar in consumer taxes that we're going to be paying, only 12 cents are going to come back in income tax cuts. That's the reality. The HST may work for some, but it will not work for Ontario's families.

Yesterday, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce wrote to me to explain that under the HST, and I quote from their letter, "employment will continue to grow, albeit at a slightly lower rate than the status quo." And by "slightly," they mean 40,000 jobs a year. Would the Premier use the word "slight" to describe 40,000 jobs a year lost because of his HST scheme?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've got a copy of that letter to the leader of the NDP. It says: "It has been reported in several media that our report concluded sales tax reform will lead to the loss of some 40,000 jobs in the province.

"Let the record show that this narrow interpretation of the report is categorically not true."

I think my colleague knows in her heart of hearts that the reason the harmonized sales tax is so strongly recommended by economists not only here in Canada but worldwide is because in fact it strengthens our economy. It enhances the competitiveness of our businesses. It enables them to hire more Ontarians, which is our ultimate objective: to ensure that there is more employment, more job security for more Ontarians. Our HST is an absolutely integral part of that plan, to achieving that end.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On countless occasions, the Premier and his ministers said that the HST will create jobs; in fact, they're shouting it right now. Yesterday's letter from the chamber concedes that the HST will cost Ontario jobs. They say the effect will be slight; I say 40,000 people not getting a job in the middle of a recession is alarming. How can the Premier justify a policy that will cost 40,000 jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think I've got to repeat, for the benefit of my colleague, the contents of the letter which was sent to her. Again, the letter says:

"It has been reported in several media that our report concluded sales tax reform will lead to the loss of some 40,000 jobs in the province.

"Let the record show that this narrow interpretation of the report is categorically not true."

In fact, the report explicitly states that the level of employment does not decline as a result of sales tax reform. I think, again, it's important to consider information in its entirety, because it's more accurate when we do that.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier has called the HST the single-most important thing that he can do. Even his cheerleaders at the chamber of commerce concede that that means the loss of up to 40,000 jobs. The HST, coupled with the great corporate tax giveaway, will leave the treasury of this province with a gaping revenue hole. Why is the Premier backing a plan that's going to make life more expensive, that's going to make it harder to find a job, and leads to cuts in the services that Ontario families rely on?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm going to have to suggest to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I guess I'm going to have to encourage Mr. Crispino to send yet another letter to my honourable colleague, because he came to what I think is a natural and logical conclusion at the end of his letter. At the end of his letter he says, "Thank you for allowing us the opportunity to set the record straight," but apparently that has not worked. The record is not yet straight in the mind of my honourable colleague, so I'll encourage him yet again to send another letter to my honourable colleague.

HEALTH CARE

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is to the Minister of Health. Minister, today in the public gallery, a number of residents and health care workers have made the long trip from Burk's Falls to show their frustration at losing their health centre. They brought petitions signed by some 6,700 residents, which I'll present today.

In rural areas, we don't have the luxury of having a hospital or doctor's office on every corner, so the loss of this health centre is a significant blow to this community and surrounding-area residents. These residents and health care workers are asking you to reconsider closing the Burk's Falls health centre. Minister, will you do that?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me assure the member opposite and all members of this Legislature that we're committed to providing quality health care for all Ontarians, regardless of where they live. So whether they live in rural areas or in urban areas, we are committed to excellent health care for all.

We do recognize the unique challenges that rural and northern communities face, and that's why we've created

the rural and northern panel. It will identify some of the unique health care challenges, and it will recommend steps that we can take to improve access to health care in rural and northern Ontario using existing resources. Our government is committed to examining the issues and providing a provincial framework to support northern and rural communities. We expect to hear back from them in early 2010.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: Well, Minister, the panel won't have done its work by the time Burk's Falls is closed. Burk's Falls will be closed by the time this panel reports.

Minister, this is the second trip to Queen's Park for many of these people. Of course, last time they came down here, they didn't know that a billion dollars had been wasted on consultants and cronies by Canada's worst government with little to show for it. They are justifiably upset. You cannot expect people to keep quiet when their health care is in question. Closing the Burk's Falls health centre just pushes those patients on to hospitals in Huntsville or North Bay, forcing them to drive long distances in bad weather for the care they currently get in their own community.

Minister, is this your idea of better health care?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the initial question, we want to look at exactly the kind of challenges you raise. We know that people in rural areas face challenges when it comes to distance, when it comes to weather. Access to health care for all Ontarians is very important to us.

I think it's also important to acknowledge that the platform of the party opposite is actually to reduce health care spending. As far as I know, cutting \$2.5 billion out of health care is still part of the Conservative Party platform.

HEALTH CARE

M^{me} France G  linas: Ma question est   galement pour la ministre de la Sant   et des Soins de longue dur  e.

Today in the gallery are Bob and Brenda Haynes from Port Colborne. Bob's mother, Mrs. Haynes, recently developed a blood clot and decided that she'd better get to the hospital and get some care, like all of us would do. But Mrs. Haynes lives in Port Colborne, and they no longer have an emergency department. Mrs. Haynes finally got to an emergency room in a different hospital in a different community. With all the waits and delays, precious time had been wasted and tragedy struck. Mrs. Haynes suffered a severe stroke.

Minister, how can you allow health care cuts to rural communities that put our families at risk?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: First, let me express my sincere condolences and wishes for the very best for your family. I think this story demonstrates how precious our health care system is to all of us.

I think it's also very important to acknowledge that there have been no cuts to health care. There have been, year after year, increases to health care. In fact, we have

increased access to health care, we've increased spending in health care. In the Niagara area, we have enhanced health care substantially. In fact, we've increased spending by over \$88 million. That's not to say there aren't challenges going forward. It is what I am committed to doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France G  linas: The reality is that the emergency department was not there and his mother had a severe stroke. The reality is also that your government has given its blessing to emergency room and urgent care centre closures across many northern and rural communities, while we all know a million dollars a day is handed out to consultants; a billion dollars went to eHealth with little to show for it. In the gallery, like my colleague mentioned, there are residents from Burk's Falls who lost their urgent care centre and they are seeking answers.

Now Ontarians are being told that there are more cuts to services on the way. Will this government agree to a moratorium on northern and rural health care service cuts until the expert panel that you referred to releases its report?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The only thing we are doing is improving health care in this province, and I tell you that we have made tremendous gains.

When I think back to 2003, when I was first elected, there was a serious lack of access to primary care physicians. Today, over 800,000 Ontarians have access to primary care that they didn't have before. That includes people in rural areas, that includes people right across the province.

When I was elected in 2003, people waited for a hip replacement for well over a year. We've cut wait times for hip replacements by 57%. That's 200 days faster that people are getting new hips than they were when we were elected.

We can talk about cataract surgery. People were waiting well over a year, sometimes two years, for cataract surgery. We've been able to cut wait times for cataract surgery by 203 days. That's 203 days that people are able to read—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1100

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I was pleased to hear yesterday that the federal government has approved the H1N1 vaccine for use in Canada and that provinces, including Ontario, have begun distributing the vaccine to communities. My St. Paul's constituents have begun asking me when vaccination against H1N1 will begin in their community. Many have young children or specific medical conditions and want to ensure they get vaccinated early so they can be protected against the potential serious impacts the flu could have on them.

Could the minister please tell this House what Ontario's strategy is to get the vaccine out to Ontarians, especially those who need it the most?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a very important question, and I do urge all members of the Legislature to actually pay attention to this because it's important for all of our constituents.

We got federal approval yesterday for the H1N1 vaccine. The vaccine is already on the road getting out to public health units. Our public health officials are deploying the 700,000 doses we've received so far. Vaccinations will begin next week, in some locations as soon as Monday.

We are hoping that people will respect the prioritization of immunizations. There are some people who need it more than others—who need it first. We are asking to let these people go first: people 65 and under with chronic conditions; healthy children six months and over, up to five years; people living in remote and isolated communities; health care workers; and household contacts of care providers of people who are at high risk but not able to be immunized.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Eric Hoskins: I look forward to getting my vaccination, but I also will wait my turn. I look forward to passing along this information to the residents of St. Paul's and telling them to visit ontario.ca/flu for more information.

There have been a number of concerns raised by health officials, doctors and the media regarding the H1N1 vaccine and its possible effects on pregnant women. Many of my constituents are extremely concerned about how safe this vaccine is for themselves, their wives, their sisters and their friends. It is critical that we ensure Ontarians are protected against the spread of this virus, but it is understandable that there are some apprehensions when there are contradictory reports.

Can the minister please explain how pregnant women should go about getting the H1N1 vaccine?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate the opportunity to clear up some of the confusion around this.

Let me be clear: The vaccine is safe for women who are pregnant and they should get vaccinated. We are recommending that all pregnant women with pre-existing health conditions and healthy pregnant women in the second half of their pregnancy—that's more than 20 weeks—should speak to their health care provider about receiving the—

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Adjuvanted.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The adjuvanted vaccine, thank you, the vaccine with the booster.

Healthy pregnant women in the first half of their pregnancy are at less risk of complications from the flu and should wait to receive the unadjuvanted vaccine when it's available. This recommendation is based on agreement among the federal and provincial governments of Canada and based on the World Health Organization's recommendations in July.

I do encourage all pregnant women to get vaccinated. You will not only protect yourself, you will protect your unborn child.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is for the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. Under the leadership of this government, Ontario ranks dead last in all of Canada for university class sizes, student-to-faculty ratios and per student funding—only the state of Alabama has a worse student funding record, in all of North America—yet another reason why this government has been declared the worst government in Canada.

But just yesterday, we learned from Statistics Canada that this government has finally achieved a first place finish—yes, first place, as the province with the highest tuition fees in all of Canada. As the Canadian Federation of Students said, "There's no question that Ontario's students are losing out."

Is this not confirmation that the minister's Reaching Higher plan was nothing more than a plan to reach deeper into the pockets of Ontario students?

Hon. John Milloy: The short answer is no. The Reaching Higher plan was the largest single investment in post-secondary education in this province in 40 years.

The question that we need to ask in light of the statistics that the member refers to is, is higher education affordable here in the province of Ontario? And I'm very proud to say that of the \$6.2 billion, \$1.5 billion went towards student aid, giving the province of Ontario one of the most generous student aid programs in the country.

At the same time, as the honourable member is aware, we do limit tuition increases through a framework, and if a university or college does increase tuition within that framework, they have to make sure that they provide additional funding for students so that financial reasons are never an obstacle to students attending post-secondary education in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jim Wilson: When all is said and done, you have the distinction, whether you want to acknowledge it or not, of being the province with the highest tuition fees in all of Canada. Nova Scotia was the highest up until this year; they actually lowered theirs by a few hundred dollars because they were so embarrassed that they were ripping students off. But you seem to think that's just normal.

The Ontario Undergraduate Student Alliance says that students have seen their costs grow from what was once a reasonable and manageable rate to what is now an amount that is difficult, if not sometimes impossible, to earn over the summer, even when times are good. Perhaps tuitions wouldn't be so high in this province if you weren't spending \$1 million per day on consultants through untendered contracts. In this ministry alone, the government gave a \$435,000 untendered contract to John Ronson, the co-chair of the 1995 Liberal election campaign.

I ask the minister, is it the intention of this government to make post-secondary education so unaffordable—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister.

Hon. John Milloy: I'm very proud that Ontario has one of the best post-secondary education systems in the country, if not the world. We boast universities and colleges which are world class. We have made significant investments—\$6.2 billion through the Reaching Higher plan, and through the knowledge infrastructure program we came together with the federal government to invest \$1.5 billion.

We have 100,000 more students in the system, and I would put our record up against theirs. Let me remind the honourable member that when his party was in power, they cut student aid by 41% and they increased tuition at universities by 71%. We invested \$6.2 billion; they cut \$435 million from Ontario's colleges and universities in their first two years in office.

SENIOR CITIZENS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister responsible for seniors. The United Senior Citizens of Ontario have written to the minister with a summary of health, housing and transportation resolutions from their 51st convention this past August. The resolutions reflect the tragic cuts that this government has already made to seniors' services like chiropractic care and physiotherapy. Seniors are even charged user fees for their prescriptions.

This government is issuing its economic statement this afternoon. What additional cuts, costs and loss of service will seniors suffer after 3 o'clock?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I believe I'm correct in directing the question to the Minister of Health since the issues all relate to health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have made better health care services for the people of Ontario a very high priority for our government. Those investments disproportionately benefit seniors. I think we would all understand that our health care dollars are being well spent and we're getting better results for seniors because of that.

As I said in answer to an earlier question, hip replacement is a really good example. That is an issue that seniors deal with almost exclusively. People used to have to wait well over a year—two years for hips. They're down by 57%. CT scans: We're making some good progress on that. General surgery: We're coming down on wait times for that. Our whole aging—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: You might want to refer that one to where it should go.

This government has already refused to legislate bathing and personal care standards in long-term-care homes. It has privatized many health, residential and other seniors' services, the basics that seniors need to live a comfortable, affordable, dignified life. On top of all this, this government's planning to impose the dreaded and dread-

ful HST, which many retired persons have calculated will cost them significantly more every year from now on.

When will this minister and the government finally put the financial and health needs and the dignity of seniors at the top of their priority list?

1110

Hon. Deborah Matthews: One of the signature investments in health care that we've made is the aging-at-home strategy. It's over \$1 billion that is being used right now to make sure that seniors get the care they need in their own homes. It's initiatives such as meals on wheels; it's home care; it's more kinds of services. If you are concerned about the care that seniors are getting, I can assure you that our aging-at-home strategy is a very effective use of our dollars, it benefits seniors and it is the right way to go. It is the way we need to go. As our population ages, we need to improve services—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the honourable member from Hamilton—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member from Hamilton East—you just asked a question—

Mr. Paul Miller: I didn't get an answer.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just remind the member that if he is dissatisfied with a response that comes from any minister, he has the right under our standing orders to call for a late show, and I would appreciate that he would listen to the response.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: It's okay; I'm done.

TAXATION

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, the manufacturing industry plays an important role in my riding and many ridings across Ontario. Recently, communities in my riding have been hard hit by job losses as a result of the global economic recession. In Port Hope alone, companies such as Viceroy, and Collins and Aikman, are facing serious challenges. I want to know what our government can do to help these companies and help preserve these jobs. These jobs allow people to provide for their families and contribute to the Ontario economy.

Business has a concern about the implementation of the HST and what it's going to mean to them. Minister, what is the effect of the HST going to be in the manufacturing sector?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my colleague for the question. We are going to give our world-class manufacturers in this province a world-competitive tax system so they can compete and win on the world stage. That is the future of manufacturing. That's why the Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters have been calling for many years for us to reform our tax system. Specifically for manufacturers, it will provide some \$1.1 billion worth

of relief, relief that will allow our companies to be even more competitive on the world stage.

Ontario exports some 80% of what we make in this province. We export it to our sister provinces, to our friends to the south and around the world. What we need to ensure is that those companies competing on the world stage have a world competitive tax system. That's exactly why, through the HST and input tax credits, they'll receive some \$490 million worth of tax relief a year, some \$380 million in corporate tax savings and \$280 million with the elimination of the capital tax.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: There is a lot of misinformation out there regarding the HST. A group of businesses called the Smart Taxation Alliance have come together to support the HST because it will encourage business investment in Ontario and the creation of jobs. This group includes the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, AGS Automotive Systems, Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters, the Ontario Road Builders' Association, the Ontario Trucking Association, the Retail Council of Canada, and the TD Bank Financial Group.

Support continues to grow. The Information Technology Association of Canada and the Railway Association of Canada recently joined the Smart Taxation Alliance. Just yesterday, the Ontario Chamber of Commerce sent an open letter to both leaders of the opposition asking them to take the debate seriously and stop misrepresenting the facts. Minister, who can we trust on this issue? The business—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I believe that the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has been very clear on this. They issued a report called Made in Ontario. They didn't issue a report called Made Up in Ontario, I say to our friends in the third party.

It is important that we look at what the Ontario Chamber of Commerce has said. What they've been saying very consistently is that on the global stage, where we compete for jobs, we need to be competitive, and there are important things that we can do. The one thing that there is almost complete unanimity on in regard to economists is that this is the right thing to do. Difficult as it is, it is the right thing to do.

We on this side of the House say that the status quo is unacceptable. Perhaps those on the other side have a better idea, but I have yet to hear it. We are very clear, on this side of the House, that we need to ensure that our economy is growing and that the jobs of the 21st century are coming right here to Ontario. It is that growth that allows us to afford the high-quality public services that are our birthright in this province, and we will make the difficult decisions to ensure that we are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CURRICULUM

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: My question is for the Minister of Education. Minister, many students coming

out of high school do not have the basic math skills needed for university programs such as business, science and engineering. As you know, as a result, it is becoming more common for Ontario universities to offer remedial math courses to these students. Brock, Carleton, McMaster, Algoma, Wilfrid Laurier and York are just a few of the universities that have been forced to offer remedial math programs.

Minister, this indicates that there is a serious problem with our math curriculum. What will you do to ensure that our students have the necessary math skills when they enter university?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: First of all, this is the first question from my new critic, and I want to acknowledge her depth of experience as a former minister. I look forward to working with her across the floor.

I just want to note that, if we look at objective measures and we look at how we're doing internationally, the results of the pan-Canadian assessment program show that Ontario's English language students are achieving—we're the only ones to score above the Canadian average in math. So, in fact, if we look at objective measures, the resources that we have put into our schools, the professional development that we have invested, are bearing fruit.

There is obviously always more to be done, but I think we can be very proud of the fact that more kids are doing better and we've got 77% of students graduating from high school. When we came into office, 68% of kids were graduating from high school, so the investments that we're making are paying off.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: Again to the minister: According to Professor David Vaughan, the head of the math department at Wilfrid Laurier University, "The problems have gotten worse." He indicates, "Students are coming to universities with diminished mastery of many of the basic skills." This results in more students likely to fail, drop their math course and receive lower grades if they don't receive remedial help.

Minister, I think you would agree that this is a very serious and complicated problem that we shouldn't be foisting on our universities to solve. It requires immediate attention to the math curriculum at the high school level if we're to achieve the high standards that are absolutely necessary if we're going to be able to compete globally.

Minister, what curriculum changes are you prepared to make to help our students achieve math success?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: In fact, we are constantly reviewing the math curriculum. We created a minister's task force on senior mathematics and consulted with university professors. We brought university professors in to talk with us about what changes we should make. Based on that consultation, we revised the grade 12 math curriculum. It was implemented in 2007-08, and it will take a couple of years to see the full fruits of that.

But I just want to go back again to the international comparisons. If you look at how we're doing internation-

ally, Ontario students are scoring very high. If we look at science—and I think we can understand that a good understanding of math is important in science—and we look at the PISA results—the Programme for International Student Assessment—in overall science, only Finland and Hong Kong performed higher than Ontario. So, by objective measures, Ontario students are doing very, very well.

POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A question to the Premier: Premier, while your government squandered close to \$1 billion on eHealth, spent \$389 million on consultants and hid hundreds of thousands of dollars in secret payments to Ontario government bureaucrats, university tuition fees in Ontario rose between 20% and 36%, making Ontario the most expensive place in Canada to get a post-secondary education. Ontario undergraduates pay close to, if not, \$6,000 a year in tuition.

When is your government going to redirect its generosity away from privileged insiders to university students?

1120

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities.

Hon. John Milloy: I remind the member again that the real question is the affordability of post-secondary education here in the province of Ontario. I'm very, very pleased to say that we have one of the most generous student support systems in the country. We've more than doubled our investments in student aid since 2003. We've tripled the number of grants available to students. In fact, right now one in four students receive non-payable grants.

In terms of tuition itself, I continue to remind the honourable member that we have a tuition framework which limits increases in tuition at colleges and universities. If a college or university takes advantage of an increase within that framework, at the same time they have to provide additional financial assistance to students to make sure that financing is never an obstacle to a student attending post-secondary education.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Students are drowning in debt, and the minister keeps saying, "We're working on a quality life preserver." That's the answer he gives us all the time. Ontario is at the bottom in Canada in per capita funding for post-secondary education. Class sizes in our universities are the largest in Canada. Many of our university courses are taught by part-time professors. Many universities have flat fees for part-time students. Text-book and travel grants have been cut in half. And your record-setting tuition rates will increase the crippling debt of our students at a time when many graduates have been unable to find jobs.

Minister, why is it that every other province in the country is able to take better care of their university students than you are?

Hon. John Milloy: Again, I believe that we have one of the best post-secondary systems in the country, if not the world, here in Ontario. Over the last number of years, we have welcomed 100,000 more students into our colleges and universities. The member speaks about student assistance. I would point out that when it comes to student aid, the loan default rate is the lowest it's ever been in the province of Ontario. We've tried to take a balanced approach. We've limited tuition and we've increased student aid. Mr. Speaker, they tried to take a balanced approach as well: They increased tuition by 50% and the NDP cut student aid by 50%. That was their version of balance.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M. Yasir Naqvi: Ma question s'adresse à la ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones. Le commissaire aux services en français, François Boileau, a dévoilé hier son deuxième rapport annuel sur l'état des services en français en Ontario. De nombreux francophones de mon comté attendaient ce rapport. J'aimerais que la ministre dise à cette Assemblée ce qu'elle pense de ce rapport et ce qu'elle compte faire pour répondre aux recommandations qu'il contient.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais féliciter mon collègue d'Ottawa—Centre pour son intérêt à apprendre la langue de Molière. Félicitations.

J'ai été heureuse de recevoir hier le deuxième rapport du commissaire aux services en français. Lorsque nous avons créé ce Commissariat aux services en français, notre objectif était d'améliorer l'accès de la communauté francophone à des services de qualité. Alors c'est une illustration supplémentaire que notre gouvernement est un gouvernement responsable et engagé vers plus de transparence. Nous prouvons que nous sommes prêts à rendre des comptes à la population que nous servons.

L'Office des affaires francophones est déjà en train d'analyser les recommandations du commissaire en collaboration avec d'autres ministères, et je m'engage aujourd'hui à travailler avec mes collègues pour mettre en œuvre ses recommandations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M. Yasir Naqvi: Je suis heureux de voir que le gouvernement prend très au sérieux le travail du commissaire. L'année dernière le commissaire avait rendu son premier rapport et avait fait trois recommandations. J'aimerais que la ministre nous dise ce que le gouvernement a fait pour répondre aux recommandations du premier rapport du commissaire aux services en français.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Notre gouvernement a bien avancé dans les recommandations.

Tout d'abord, j'ai annoncé en juin dernier une nouvelle définition plus inclusive des francophones qui a permis d'identifier en Ontario près de 50 000 Ontariens de plus qui utilisent le français couramment.

Ensuite, nous avons mis en place en mars un nouveau modèle de gestion à l'intérieur des ministères avec la

création de cinq chefs de services en français qui ont un accès privilégié aux sous-ministres.

Enfin, la troisième recommandation concerne notre pouvoir réglementaire sur près de 7 500 agences. Alors l'Office des affaires francophones a commencé une analyse juridique qui devrait déboucher bientôt sur des recommandations. Le commissaire est conscient que c'est un travail de longue haleine, et j'ai hâte de poursuivre ce travail avec lui et mes autres collègues en ce qui concerne les recommandations qu'il a annoncées hier.

TIRE DISPOSAL

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. I've heard from farmers that your government has introduced yet another cost that is hurting our agricultural community. A farmer from Dufferin-Caledon recently came to see me about the tire stewardship fee that came into effect on September 1. To replace a 42-inch tractor tire, there is now a \$250 fee. By comparison, for a car tire the new fee is \$5.84. Minister, why are you imposing this discriminatory new fee on farmers?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: To the Minister of the Environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, as everyone knows, it's not a tax. It is an environmental fee that goes to the stewardship council of Ontario to make sure that the tires that we have an overabundance of in this province—over 11 million abandoned tires are all over the province—are properly recycled.

This government believes that we have a stewardship of the environment and one good way to do it is to make sure that those items that can be properly disposed of and properly recycled into other material should—that we should do that. That's exactly what the tire recycling program is all about. It is not money that's coming to the government. It's coming to the stewardship council, which will make sure that the proper recycling is done.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I asked the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs because it is her responsibility to defend Ontario farmers. The minister is proving once again that she refuses to defend Ontario farmers.

Minister, since the Minister of Agriculture will not defend Ontario farmers at the cabinet table, will you immediately exempt farmers from the tire stewardship program?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I'll refer the question back to the Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I think that it's very important to remind the people in this assembly and to say to farmers—who, by the way, are the first stewards of this earth and who look for every opportunity to demonstrate environmental responsibility. I would say to the honourable member that before any of this was considered, there was—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will remind the honourable member from Dufferin, as I reminded another member earlier: If one is dissatisfied with an answer, they have an opportunity under the standing orders to call for a late show.

Minister of Agriculture.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's very important to remember that when the government moves in this direction, there is an opportunity for the public to provide their input.

My colleague the Minister of the Environment would remind the folks here that these fees are part of the cost of doing business, and for farmers that does become a part of their business program, and with programs in the agriculture industry, they can claim that as a business expense.

Farmers, I'm sure, in Dufferin-Caledon want to be environmentally responsible—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ASSISTANCE TO FARMERS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday I asked the Minister of Finance whether the government would consider implementing a tax credit for farmers who donate surplus crops to food banks. For every dollar that the tax credit costs, \$7 of fresh food will make it on to the tables of low-income families—140,000 children. That's an excellent return on investment.

In his answer yesterday, the Minister of Finance chose to attack me and the NDP rather than comment on this innovative idea. So I am asking the question again, this time to the Premier: Will the government implement a food producer donation tax credit?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Let me just make public the private conversation that the Minister of Finance and I had subsequent to the question being put forward to the minister. We both thought that there may be something to this. The Minister of Finance has in fact undertaken to consider this. It was the first time he had been apprised of this particular possibility.

I'll tell you why I am personally drawn to it—and I'm not making any commitments—because some time ago, I had the privilege of putting forward a private member's bill, a good Samaritan bill, that enabled people in the fast food industry and our grocery stores to make contributions of food, which would otherwise go into the garbage, to our needy. That worked, and it worked well. As I said to the Minister of Finance—he's undertaken to take a serious look at this, just so you know.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the Premier for coming to an entirely different conclusion than his Minister of Finance, because millions of pounds of fresh food are wasted every year in Ontario. At the same time, food banks lack healthy produce to provide to an increasing number of Ontarians forced to turn to them for help.

Tax credits for crop donations to food banks have been successfully implemented in Oregon, Colorado and

North Carolina. The Ontario Association of Food Banks and the Ontario Federation of Agriculture support the idea; so do thousands of hungry Ontarians.

I thank the Premier for having a change of heart, and I look forward to him saying a good deal more in the future in support of this good idea.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: As I said, I don't want to exaggerate; neither do I want to diminish the commitment. We are going to take a serious look at this. I'm drawn to it. I like the sound of it. Obviously there is a cost to it, and we need to take a look at that as well.

What I can say, in that very vein, is that when there was a sow cull in Ontario, Ontario families benefited from that. We moved quickly to provide \$110,000 to process over 100,000 pounds of pork, something that was welcomed by the Ontario Association of Food Banks. As I say to my honourable colleague, I appreciate the idea, I appreciate his championing this idea, and we will indeed give this very serious consideration.

TOURISM

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. As we all know, the economy has been on the minds of everyone lately. There is no doubt that these are challenging times.

I know that Ontario's tourism industry is feeling the effect of the economic climate as well. It is facing significant challenges, including confusion over passport requirements, the fluctuation of the Canadian dollar and the state of the economy. These challenges have impacted each and every community in Ontario, including in my riding of Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock.

In this time of economic concern, can the minister explain to this House what the McGuinty government is doing to sustain the tourism industry across the province?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: As I acknowledged earlier this week, these are challenging times, and they are certainly challenging times for the tourism industries, like so many other sectors in the province.

Ontario's festivals and events are a major element of our tourism industry and an economic driver for many, many communities across the province. Firstly, I'd like to just mention to the member and to the House that it was the McGuinty government that created Celebrate Ontario, a program that is committed to providing ongoing funding in its program and to provide funding to events and festivals across the province.

Again this year, we are pleased that we are investing \$11 million in the upcoming Celebrate Ontario 2010. Last year, we were able to help 224 festivals and events in the province. This was more than double the number of events we helped the year before.

I'm pleased to advise the House that on September 30, an invitation to festivals and events organizers was extended to apply to our program for 2010. The program not only helps festivals and events enhance their programming, it also gives both residents and visitors new reasons to travel to a variety of areas across the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The time for question period has ended.

This House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.
The House recessed from 1134 to 1300.

SUPPLEMENTARY ESTIMATES

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I have a message from the Honourable David Onley, the Lieutenant Governor, signed by his own hand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The Lieutenant Governor transmits supplementary estimates of certain sums required for the services of the province for the year ending March 31, 2010, and recommends them to the Legislative Assembly.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

NATIONAL FOSTER FAMILY WEEK

Ms. Sylvia Jones: The week of October 18 to 24 is National Foster Family Week. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the tremendous commitment that foster families make to our children.

Foster families are not only responsible for giving children the basic necessities of life, but also creating a home where they feel loved and protected. Last year, over 7,000 foster homes provided family-based care for vulnerable children in Ontario. As it stands, over 27,000 children in Ontario are in need of alternative care from children's aid societies. The importance and value of foster families is immeasurable.

We must remember that volunteers strengthen, enhance and augment children's aid society programs. These programs could not function without these skilled and committed people. With their dedication, vulnerable children in Ontario are able to live in a caring home.

Professionals also play an integral role. Over 8,000 full-time employees work for children's aid societies. Without their support, foster families would be unable to receive the help they need.

However, while children's aid employees strive to improve the lives of families in Ontario, Liberal budget cuts have left CASs struggling to retain their valuable and committed employees. With looming cuts, foster families should be concerned that their support network will not be there for them and their families.

Foster families play a fundamental role for children in need. Our communities have been strengthened because of these remarkable citizens. I thank and applaud them for their efforts.

SCOTTY RAMAGE

Mr. Wayne Arthurs: I rise in the House today to commend an extraordinary constituent in my riding of Pickering-Scarborough East. Alfred Ramage, better

known simply as Scotty, is the most committed volunteer in our community that you could possibly find. At the age of 78, Scotty has been married to his wife, Betty, for the past 56 years, and has been volunteering his time consistently for the past 40 years.

Mr. Ramage enlisted in the British army, where he served from 1948 to 1951, and joined the militia for the next eight years. He then immigrated to Canada.

In 1969, Scotty began volunteering with St. John Ambulance, with whom he is still involved, helping to teach first aid courses, standing on duty at hockey arenas during community events and personally assisting at two major accidents, at one of which, a train derailment, he spent two solid days. Mr. Ramage has received a medal from St. John Ambulance for his long years of service.

Scotty is also known in our riding as a committed community member who has gone above and beyond giving to the Red Cross, having donated 189 pints of blood. He was awarded a pin to commemorate his 150th donation.

To list this generous man's achievements would take far more time than is available to me, but I can tell you that Mr. Ramage has received numerous awards, including the town of Pickering civic award. He is past chairman of Poppy Day for the Royal Canadian Legion and past president of Branch 606 in our riding.

To truly commemorate Scotty's tremendous outreach in our community, he had the honour of receiving the Governor General's Caring Canadian Award in 2007.

I want to congratulate Scotty for his tremendous work in our community.

ENDANGERED SPECIES

Mr. John Yakabuski: When the Minister of Natural Resources introduced Bill 184, the Endangered Species Act, I expressed concern at the time that the government had surrendered to the agenda of those opposed to logging and that the legislation was based on political science. After hearing of the regulations concerning the habitat of the wood turtle, there is no doubt that is true. The wood turtle habitat regulation received cabinet approval after one meeting in Toronto. The people whose livelihood will be most affected were not part of the meeting. Those vehemently opposed to logging got whatever they asked for—this, without any scientific study to support the request.

Why is the McGuinty government willing to enact regulations that will literally devastate the economy of my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke? The answer appears to be simple mathematics: It's all about votes. Whatever happened to principles and doing what is right? Cabinet approved this regulation without consideration for the crippling effect it would have on the rural people most affected. No socioeconomic assessment was ever conducted. Sacrificing the people of rural communities to satisfy those who despise their way of living is clearly putting politics over people.

This regulation has not yet been filed. I would ask the Premier to do the right thing and table it until meaningful consultations with those affected are held. You have your hands around their throats. Will you squeeze tighter, ensuring their demise, or release your grip, let them breathe and listen to their side of the story?

CHILD CARE

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Wednesday, October 21—yesterday—was Child Care Worker and Early Childhood Educator Appreciation Day. This year, Dr. Charles Pascal, a constituent of mine in Toronto–Danforth, received the annual award for excellence in advocacy by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care and CUPE Ontario for his work with our best future in mind.

This past summer, I met with a group of frustrated parents in my riding who were anxious to find the safe, affordable, well-run daycare, publicly funded child care, that's not only good for our children, our families and our communities but also is essential to help us rebuild Ontario's economy.

There are seven concerts for children and parents being held around the province from October to November of this year, sponsored by the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, CUPE Ontario and the Ontario Federation of Labour, to advance the child care agenda. The event in my riding of Toronto–Danforth, called It's Time to Jump Up for Public Child Care, will be at Riverdale Collegiate, 1094 Gerrard Street East, on November 8, from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Chris McKhool and Quebec's Genticoru will be performing. There will be readings by local authors and goodies for kids to bring home.

I urge everyone to come out and support daycare and support these events. I'll be there showing my support.

HANOVER VENEER

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Last Friday, I had the opportunity to make an exciting funding announcement on behalf of the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Bernie McGlynn Lumber will receive a \$191,300 grant through the ministry's forest sector prosperity fund in order to establish a new company, Hanover Veneer, in the community of Hanover, which will produce high-quality veneer panels. This company will also be provided a loan guarantee of \$765,000.

Hanover Veneer is a manufacturer of high-quality hardwood veneer panels. This facility is one of only a few integrated mills that can slice and splice veneer in the same location. When fully operational, Hanover Veneer will create about 28 jobs within the mill, in addition to other spinoff benefits in the local economy.

The McGuinty government has committed over \$1 billion in various programs over five years to increase the competitiveness of Ontario's forest industry. The forest sector prosperity fund and loan guarantee program has leveraged over \$742 million in new private sector investment. This is yet another example of how this govern-

ment continues to make investments in sustainability and building a strong economy for the future.

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DISASTER RELIEF

Mr. Jim Wilson: Over a month ago in this House, the Deputy Premier, George Smitherman, said in response to my question regarding assistance for apple growers who were severely affected by the August 20 tornado in the Town of the Blue Mountains, that he would work with the agriculture minister and me to come up with a solution for our apple growers. Well, a lot of time has passed since then, and as it stands today, two months after the tornado, the farmers haven't received anything. It's estimated that up to \$4 million in damage was done that may not be covered by existing programs.

To date, it has been left up to me and the Ontario Fruit and Vegetable Growers' Association to assess the damage and put a value on it. The government promised to do it weeks ago, and to date nobody has come to confirm the apple growers' losses. All Agricorp did was speak to the farmers and tell them what they could have, or should have, received if they were enrolled in its programs. They didn't document the growers' financial losses, as was promised by the government.

The Liberal government has said all the right things, but there's no action behind their words. Two ministers have come up and toured the damage, posed for photos and gotten themselves on the evening news, but they've done absolutely nothing to actually help, despite assurances from them that they would help.

There is a real need for assistance in the Town of the Blue Mountains. It takes up to nine years for an apple tree to come back and be profitable after it is planted. So I call upon the government to keep their promises to help, get down to work and get money flowing to these apple growers.

SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM

Mr. Mario Sergio: Just recently, the Toronto Foundation for Student Success was in my riding of York West to promote nutrition programs in our schools and bring awareness to their new partnership with Breakfast Clubs of Canada. This exciting partnership will help support more than 600 nutritional programs across the city, and will ensure that our most vulnerable students receive a healthy breakfast each day before they begin their classes.

I'm happy to report that Emery Collegiate, C.W. Jefferys and Westview Centennial, three high schools within York West, were presented with grants this month to maintain their breakfast programs. This partnership and the funding it brings will go a long way to improve student learning in our schools.

I would like to thank Breakfast Clubs of Canada for raising awareness and financial support for this great cause. I would also like to thank the Toronto Foundation

for Student Success for continuing their advocacy for students across the city of Toronto as they continue promoting the importance of nutrition in our schools. I also would like to thank Minister Best and the Ontario government for recognizing and supporting the Toronto Foundation for Student Success breakfast club.

SMALL BUSINESS

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I stand today to acknowledge October as Small Business Month. Every October, the government of Ontario recognizes the achievements of entrepreneurs and small businesses across Ontario.

Small businesses in Ontario account for 97% of firms. In my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South, these are businesses like Enjo Canada, which drive the local economy and create jobs. Small businesses contribute to Ontario's diverse, innovative and globally competitive economy, and while we celebrate Small Business Month, their efforts are felt all year round.

As part of Ontario's competitive tax reform package to make Ontario more competitive, small businesses will have a tax cut of about 17% and the small business surtax will be eliminated. We need to do whatever it takes to strengthen our economy and create new jobs. When businesses succeed, Ontario succeeds.

So I salute small businesses and say thank you to all the small business operators across the province who are generating wealth and making our communities and this province prosperous to live in.

ISLAMIC HISTORY MONTH

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: I'm honoured to rise today and share with my colleagues and all Ontarians that October is Islamic History Month in Canada. I would like to welcome and thank the members of the community who have come today to exhibit and discuss the important role Islamic society has played in our history. I commend them for their efforts to build bridges of understanding, mutual discovery and appreciation between Canadian Muslims and Canadians of all beliefs.

Throughout this month, communities across this country will celebrate and share the diversity and rich history of Muslim civilization, with activities, exhibitions, lectures, book fairs, documentary films and, best of all, an opportunity to learn about such an important part of history and our own Canadian fabric. Islamic culture and Muslim individuals have profoundly influenced and advanced the arts, sciences, medicine, architecture, humanities, music, philosophy and spirituality, both today and over thousands of years.

This year, Islamic History Month Canada is celebrating its third year on the theme of Islamic finance, which is a timely topic. Islamic financial principles rest on the balanced allocation of money and the absence of interest. For example, Islamic mortgage holders pay rent rather than interest, and banks must match loans with deposits, charging fees rather than interest to pay for their services.

Also integral to Islamic financial values is the Zakat, whereby Muslims offer 2.5% of their wealth for charity, to share their good fortune with the community and those in need. We might take a moment to consider what this large and growing financial model has to teach us in this time of financial challenge.

Again, I would like to thank the Muslim community of Ontario for their hard work, and I encourage all Ontarians to take a few moments this October to learn about the important contributions of Islam to our history, culture and daily lives.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Hillier assumes ballot item number 47 and Mrs. Witmer assumes ballot item number 59.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GENERAL GOVERNMENT

Ms. Helena Jaczek: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on General Government and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bill as amended:

Bill 191, An Act with respect to land use planning and protection in the Far North / Projet de loi 191, Loi relative à l'aménagement et à la protection du Grand Nord.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed? Agreed.

Report adopted.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 74(b), the bill is therefore ordered for second reading.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

1105481 ONTARIO INC. ACT, 2009

Mr. Kular moved first reading of the following bill:
Bill Pr28, An Act to revive 1105481 Ontario Inc.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to standing order 86, this bill is referred to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: It has become apparent that all of the government members have copies of this statement, but that that hospitality—

Interjections.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, you're passing them around right now. I would like the same advantage as other members of the Legislature, Mr. Speaker.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This is a ministerial statement—for example, unlike a budget—so it's only required that copies be provided to the critics of the opposition, but it's my understanding that copies are going to be made available.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I'm told copies are available in your lobby. Are we all set? Just so that we understand, it's different than a budget distribution.

Minister of Finance.

ECONOMIC OUTLOOK AND FISCAL REVIEW

PERSPECTIVES ÉCONOMIQUES ET REVUE FINANCIÈRE

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to present the 2009 Ontario economic outlook and fiscal review.

In the past year, the recession has had a significant impact on the global economy—and on Ontario.

Many jurisdictions are facing sharp declines in revenues and increasing expenses as people turn to governments for support.

Notre mission à l'heure actuelle est claire : créer des emplois, aider les familles et mettre en place les conditions propices à une nouvelle ère de croissance économique.

Our plan to confront the challenge of this global recession, as outlined in the 2009 budget, was and continues to be the right plan for the times.

Like governments all over the world, we have taken firm action. We are investing in infrastructure, in skills training and in reshaping our tax system, all to ensure that we are ready for growth.

We have spent the last six years making steady progress rebuilding our public services and now we must turn our attention to sustaining them.

Mr. Speaker, today I will update you on the province's economic outlook and fiscal circumstances.

The global downturn continues to dramatically impact families, businesses and governments.

The global recession has been severe and widespread. According to the International Monetary Fund, world trade is contracting by 11.9% this year.

Economies all over the world have contracted, some far more dramatically than ours. The United States and Europe saw striking declines. Both India and China saw notable slowdowns.

Based on the best available advice, we project a decline of 3.5% in Ontario's real GDP in 2009, followed by modest gains of 2% in 2010 and 3% in 2011. Our planning assumptions are more conservative than the average private sector forecasts.

As of the second quarter of 2009, Ontario's real GDP was 5% below its pre-recession peak.

Due to the global recession, our economy is now the same size as it was in 2005.

Tax revenues are also now at 2005 levels.

As we recently reported in the public accounts, corporate tax revenues last year fell by an unprecedented 48.1%, or over \$6 billion.

At the same time, the recession has driven up demand for government services.

More people rely on social assistance. More people require skills training. More people go back to college and university. More people rely on health care services. During a downturn, people depend more heavily on those public services.

Growth in jobs and government revenue generally lags growth in the economy. It takes time to fully recover from a recessionary period.

Other jurisdictions face all of these challenges just as we do. But Ontario had another distinct challenge and an opportunity.

Ontario's auto industry employs hundreds of thousands of people. In fact, more cars are built in Ontario than in any other state or province in North America.

Because of that very fact, the McGuinty government took action: We provided \$4 billion to keep people working all over Ontario and to maintain our leadership in the sector—not just in the manufacturing business, but in auto parts, at auto dealers and in auto repair shops all across Ontario.

It is worth noting that Ontario is the only subnational jurisdiction in North America to have participated in the auto support plan.

Deficits have increased sharply in the world's leading economies. Furthermore, as the impact of the recession becomes clearer, governments have updated their estimates of the size of deficits over the past few months.

The US deficit is almost \$1.5 trillion. Our federal government is acknowledging a deficit of \$56 billion this year, rather than the surplus it projected just a year ago.

Almost all other Canadian provinces are forecasting larger deficits this year. The economic downturn has had a very negative impact on all of us.

Alberta is facing deficits for the first time in 15 years.

The governments of Canada, the United States and some other provinces have all recently adjusted their deficit projections upward for this year.

Due to the impact of the global economy on Ontario and our government's desire to invest in the people of

this province, the projected deficit is \$24.7 billion in 2009-10.

En raison des répercussions de l'économie mondiale sur l'Ontario et du désir de notre gouvernement d'investir dans les habitants de la province, le déficit prévu s'élève à 24,7 \$ milliards en 2009-2010.

The deficit for 2009-10 is consistent with the size of Ontario's economy, relative to the Canadian economy—and generally consistent, proportionally, to the federal government's deficit.

In recent months, we have seen signs of economic recovery.

Financial markets have started to stabilize; equity markets and housing markets have improved.

According to the most recent available statistics, Ontario's international exports increased in June, July and August.

And most importantly, Ontario's labour market has shown modest job gains in each of the past four months.

Though these signs are positive, the impact of the global economic recession is still considerable. Household wealth and consumer confidence are below pre-recessionary levels. Retail sales are still down.

The risks to economic recovery are real. Just in the past few weeks, the Canadian dollar has risen dramatically. Oil prices can also fluctuate, as we've seen recently. Rapidly rising interest rates could also be a further challenge to our economy, should that occur. The speed of the US recovery will have an impact on our growth as well.

As always, government revenues trail economic performance, so it could be some time before economic growth restores revenues to pre-recession levels.

And we know full well that in communities across Ontario, like in communities around the world, unemployment remains too high.

In the near term, we must continue to invest in job creation, in infrastructure, in skills training. Mr. Speaker, we will continue to invest in the people of Ontario.

At the first signs of an economic slowdown, almost two years ago, the McGuinty government took immediate action to lessen the impact on Ontario families by helping to retain jobs and services.

This year and next, we are investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure. A new laboratory is under way at the University of Toronto in Mississauga and Highway 17 in Kenora is being improved, to name just two examples. Shovels are in the ground and people are at work on over 650 projects right across Ontario.

We invested in the auto sector to keep people working.

And we're investing in training. Summer job programs this year helped more than 104,000 young people find employment. Over one million Ontarians have accessed our skills training programs. Our Second Career program alone has already surpassed its targets by helping almost 21,000 people retrain for jobs in very high-demand careers.

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In the 2009 budget, the McGuinty government continued to demonstrate its commitment to the most vulnerable, particularly during the economic slowdown. The Ontario child benefit program was accelerated to \$1,100 this year, two years ahead of schedule. We also increased social assistance rates for the fifth time since 2003.

Our government made a conscious decision to follow the IMF's advice to invest 2% to 3% of GDP in stimulus, as other countries and provinces have done.

Our focus has been on positioning Ontario for long-term growth.

The single most important thing we can do to make Ontario's economy more competitive is to modernize our tax system. Our proposed tax cuts and the harmonized sales tax would give our businesses and families an important advantage in the global economy. The marginal effective tax rate on income from new business investment would be cut in half—sending a strong signal that Ontario is ready for new business growth.

At the same time, 93% of Ontarians would get a permanent income tax cut. Our most modest income earners would have the lowest provincial income tax rate in Canada.

Le train de mesures fiscales que nous proposons améliorera certainement la situation de l'Ontario. Il créerait des emplois, attirerait de nouvelles entreprises dans cette province et améliorerait nettement notre avantage concurrentiel.

Our modernized tax system would be more progressive and would better position Ontario for growth. It would reduce Ontario tax revenue by \$2.3 billion over four years, an essential and timely investment in our future.

These and other measures introduced in the 2009 Ontario budget are helping families weather the global economic storm and prepare for solid economic growth as we emerge from the recession.

Ontario, along with most other jurisdictions around the world, is running a deficit in order to preserve and create jobs and establish a stronger economy after the recession.

Ontarians know that this is the right course during tough economic times.

In our 2009 budget we made the right choices for today.

As Ontario comes out of the recession, we will eliminate the deficit and pay down debt to ensure the sustainability of the public services that we all value.

Today marks the beginning of a journey that will lead to the development of our next budget. We are now launching a broad consultation with Ontarians about how best to sustain public services.

The treasury board will begin a comprehensive review of service delivery. It will provide a plan to return the province to a sustainable and firmer fiscal footing with balanced budgets, while protecting key services.

The treasury board's plan will be part of the 2010 budget.

That is just our first step. In the coming months and years, we will change how we do business in this

province. We will become a leaner and more efficient provider of quality public services.

Ontario has the second-lowest program expense per capita among all Canadian jurisdictions. We are doing well, but we need to do more.

We will call on our partners in the public and broader public sectors to help us sustain public services in the long term. We will also review all agencies, boards and commissions to ensure they are meeting Ontarians' needs and expectations.

It is incumbent upon all of us to participate in this vital conversation—to help us build consensus on how to manage through this challenge.

We will report on our plan to return the province to balance in the 2010 budget.

Nous traiterons de notre plan visant à rétablir l'équilibre budgétaire de la province dans le budget de 2010.

This won't be easy and it will take time. Working together, we can get it done.

In the coming months, we will also continue to focus on our key priorities—the priorities most important to Ontarians: job creation, health care and education.

Education is, and always has been, one of the McGuinty government's core priorities.

We are dedicated to continually improving education in this province. That is why, later this month, Premier McGuinty will make an announcement about phasing in full-day early learning for Ontario's four- and five-year-olds.

This initiative will further increase the competitive advantage already found in our highly skilled and educated workforce.

Full-day learning for our four- and five-year-olds will also help parents take advantage of new job opportunities.

Making this investment will require difficult choices, and we'll make them.

Our government will balance the commitment to maintain public services while securing a strong and sustainable fiscal footing for Ontario.

That is our task, and we look forward to it.

I have every confidence that Ontario will come through this recession wiser, more efficient, more competitive, stronger and ready for economic growth.

Je suis persuadé que l'Ontario sortira de la récession plus averti, plus efficient, plus compétitif et plus fort, et que son économie sera prête pour la prochaine ère de croissance.

We have the fundamentals in place: a highly skilled workforce, a strong education system and a passion for innovation.

We can and we will compete globally on the basis of our unique strengths.

As a result, this will always be a province where the standard of living is high and where each and every one of us has a real opportunity to succeed.

When we come out of this recession—and we will—Ontario will be bigger, Ontario will be better and Ontario will be stronger.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Now it's official: Canada's worst government is now running Canada's worst deficit. A \$25-billion deficit represents a historically dismal performance, and this minister and this Premier should be ashamed about their performance and what they've done to the province of Ontario.

Yesterday, I pointed out that Dalton McGuinty had already piled up some \$53 billion worth of debt onto the backs of Ontario families. That translated into \$11,000 of new debt for every single household in the province of Ontario. And now we know that Dalton McGuinty's debt is even worse than that \$53 billion; it is a shameful \$65.2 billion in increased debts on the backs of families. That translates into \$13,500 on the backs of every single household in our great province, a massive new debt burden on families whose household finances are already stretched to the limit.

How could things get so bad so fast? Yes, we're in a recession, but even the finance minister admitted in his speech that Ontario was hit earlier, fell harder and fell faster than anywhere else. I wonder if the Premier ever asked himself whose fault that might be.

Good times hid a fact that bad times have now revealed—that this government has taken a path of unsustainable spending based upon phony expectations of the economy. Nobody should be surprised that Dalton McGuinty's house of cards has finally come tumbling down.

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This deficit is not the McGuinty government's problem. It is proof that the McGuinty government is the problem. That is why this problem will not get fixed until we replace this sad, worn-out McGuinty government.

I'm sure you'll recall, Mr. Speaker, the McGuinty government raised business taxes in its first year, taxes that killed jobs and crippled Ontario's competitive—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order, member for Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Mr. Tim Hudak: They imposed Dalton McGuinty's so-called health tax, the largest income tax in Ontario's history, and coming this summer they are planning to one-up themselves and impose the largest sales tax greedy grab ever in the history of our province.

How can this government, which imposed new taxes so rapidly, so regularly and with such relish, still manage to squander this revenue and still pile up the most debt in Ontario's history? No doubt, to raise taxes so massively but still pile up such massive amounts of debt is a once-in-a-generation example of gross incompetence.

As the architect of the largest tax increase and largest debt increase in Ontario's history, Dalton McGuinty's time as Premier is already, sadly, one for the history books.

Let's put to rest any notion that this government will ever introduce any meaningful spending restraint. Dalton McGuinty remains hard-wired to higher taxes and higher

spending. In just six years, this government jacked up spending by 60% when our economy only grew by 7%. While middle-class families are paying higher income taxes, higher fees, higher auto insurance premiums and higher hydro bills, and spending less time with their families, the government was living high on the hog and has piled up a massive debt burden on the backs of Ontario families.

It is clear the McGuinty government has lost touch with where this money originated from. Hard-pressed families now find themselves saddled with \$13,500 each worth of Dalton McGuinty's debt. Clearly, after six years in office, the only way forward is to change this government and change this tired Premier, and we look forward to that battle ahead.

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I can stand here all afternoon.

Responses? The member for Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Since this Parliament resumed, I have waited in anticipation for this day to see exactly where this government was going to go. I have watched, though, in trepidation and fear these last few weeks. Over the last few weeks, it's been very brutal to the people of Ontario. It's been brutal to the children's aid societies that have come before the Legislature and before the committees and said that they just don't have enough money to do what they're mandated to do. It's been brutal for the unemployed who have come to my office, and I'm sure all of our offices, because the training programs upon which they were hoping to rely are no longer available and will not be available until next year. It has been brutal to the people in small-town and northern Ontario who see their hospitals closing, where they have to travel further and further to get the health care they need.

Over the past few weeks, we have seen as well unfold the whole fiasco of eHealth. We've seen unfold the whole fiasco of the \$1-million-a-day addiction of the McGuinty government to private consultants, as the money gets passed out and passed out and passed out, with little or no control.

Over the past few weeks we've also seen the unfolding of I think the greatest fiasco of all, and that will be when consumers pick up the entire tab and businesses get the entire reward for HST.

I listened today to see whether there were going to be any changes, whether the government has learned anything at all over what has happened. I'm very sorry, but I don't see the change that we all know needs to happen.

Today we look at who is going to be hurt. We look at the civil service. I can read the code words. I can see what treasury board is going to do. I can see how we're going to be leaner and meaner. You all know what that means. That means that the people who work hard for us, who are the heart and soul of Ontario, the people who are our civil servants, are going to suffer. There are going to be fewer of them, and I see the whole possibility of Dalton days on the horizon.

As well, what about the HST? The minister stands today and crows about how this is central to the government's recovery plan. But it is not part of the solution; it is part of the problem. Ordinary people across Ontario will tell you they fear what is going to happen, and they know they are going to be the ones who will lose in the end. There was not a single word about eHealth or about consultants' fees in this entire document or in what the minister said—absolutely silent. It appears that the government has not learned a single lesson, nor are they taking any avenues to change all of that.

But what I'm more worried about is what is happening to ordinary Ontarians out there. I've talked about the public employees: the very real prospect I put to them today of Dalton days, the real prospect of layoffs, the very real prospect of them, over the years, having to do more and more with less and less. And I talked to a minister just last week who complained that in her former ministry they went from 12,000 employees to 3,000 and can no longer do what she was hoping they could do. I'm looking to see even more of that in the future.

There was not a single word in this entire thing about the poverty program. This was to have been the poverty Premier who was committed to do something. The only thing that was said was that they have kept up with inflation for the last six years; there had been an 11% increase. That is precisely the inflation rate over those same six years. They are no better off today than they were in the deepest, darkest days of the government before. There's not a word about what they are going to do to actually improve the lives of the 140,000 children who go to bed hungry every night.

There's nothing about children's aid and what you're going to be doing for them, who have the most crucial job to do for the most vulnerable children in this province. There's nothing in here about programs to assist the weak, the vulnerable, the infirm and the old. There's nothing in here, or any commitment to do that at all.

There's nothing here about post-secondary education and our students, who are absolutely struggling—nothing at all in what the minister said here today. And there's no mention at all about the environment; I thought that was a key platform of this government as well.

What we have here today is more of the same old same old. The same things we've watched unfold since this Parliament resumed. The same things about eHealth and consultants—a government that lost its way—and absolutely no new plans that are going to help ordinary people. They can expect to get whacked out there in the months ahead.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: A petition regarding the new provincial sales tax, the HST:

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe–Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, veterinarian bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I want to thank Cathy Scott, Wasaga Beach, for sending this petition, which I will sign.

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TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition in support of the Tom Longboat Day Act, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tom Longboat is Canada's greatest long-distance runner; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and courageous Canadian, who is a great role model to all Canadians."

I support this petition and I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to save the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre, signed by 6,700 people. It reads:

"Whereas the Almaguin has an aging population level higher than the Ontario average and our local hospital services are vital to our community's economy; and

"Whereas past records of the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre indicate that an average of 8,000 to 10,000 clients per year are treated in the urgent care clinic and patients face longer waits at the Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare services ... emergency room if our urgent care centre is closed; and

"Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care ... has struck a task force whose mandate is to develop a rural health care policy;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the Ontario government stop the cuts to and maintain the existing hospital services, including our inpatient beds, urgent care centre, lab, diabetes education, and publicly funded physiotherapy;

"Be it further resolved that the Ontario government call a moratorium on further changes at the Burk's Falls and District Health Centre until the MOHLTC task force has completed the proposed rural health care policy;

"Be it further resolved that the task force come to Burk's Falls for public consultation on the future of our local hospital and health services."

I've signed this petition, as I support it, and now pass it on to Henry.

IDENTITY THEFT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have another petition which has to do with identity theft and I'm delighted to read it to this Parliament. It is addressed to the Minister of Government Services:

"Whereas identity theft is the fastest-growing crime in North America;

"Whereas confidential and private information is being stolen on a regular basis, affecting literally thousands of people;

"Whereas the cost of this crime exceeds billions of dollars;

"Whereas countless hours are wasted to restore one's good credit rating;

"We, the undersigned, demand that Bill 38, which passed the second reading unanimously in the Ontario Legislature on December 8 ... be brought before committee and that the following issues be included for consideration and debate:

"(1) All consumer reports should be provided in a truncated (masked-out) form, protecting our vital private information such as SIN and credit card numbers.

"(2) Should a credit bureau discover that there has been a breach of consumer information, the agency should immediately inform the victimized consumer.

"(3) Credit bureaus should only report inquiries resulting out of actual applications for credit and for no other reasons.

"(4) Credit bureaus should investigate any complaints within 30 days and correct or automatically delete any information found unconfirmed or inaccurate."

Since I agree with this petition, I'm delighted to sign it.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have here a petition signed by more than 6,000 Ontarians and it's been submitted by the Ontario-Korean Businessmen's Association.

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

"Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

"Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

"Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of 'if' but of 'when';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now."

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition, and I'm delighted to see Rob Levery of the Ontario Historical Society's name on it. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have here petitions with several hundred signatures.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal ... to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

"Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

"Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate

and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

"Whereas local school bus operators support other local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

"Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

"Whereas the outcome of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be a short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities."

I'm pleased to sign this.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that has to do with school-aged children and blood sugar monitoring, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

"Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

"Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child's school several times throughout the day in order to test their child's blood sugar levels; and

"Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Parliament of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

"(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child's parent/guardian."

I'm delighted to sign this petition because I agree with it 100%.

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CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians from Dunnville, Caledonia and Hagersville. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Mr. Speaker, thank you very much that you continue to listen to these petitions, but they are very important. This one has to do with GO Transit, that is now part of Metrolinx. It reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents, draw attention to the parties listed to the following events:

"That the construction project, specifically the piling or pile-driving around the West Toronto Diamond junction, is invasive to residents and businesses;

"That many people are distraught and have suffered physical and mental ailments due to construction;

"That sound and intense low vibrations have displaced residents from their homes during the day and displaced multiple businesses;

"That the noise is harmful to infants and children outside and people who are ill or caring for children cannot stay at home during the day;

"That duplicates of home inspections are being withheld from homeowners and businesses by order of the construction company in charge;

"That people who live in the community speak many languages and have not been given adequate information or information in their language to help them advocate on their own behalf in terms of damage to their place of residence, loss of income, or related emotional and physical stress;

"That home inspections are only being offered to residents within a certain radius of the construction site but many outside that radius are still greatly affected;

"That there exists a less invasive method of piling, as recommended in an environmental assessment of the area in 2007;

"Therefore, your petitioners call upon the above respected parties in the Parliament of Ontario to immediately halt construction of the West Diamond joint

venture project until acceptable methods are implemented.”

And I’m sending this petition to you with Rushabh.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians stretching from Owen Sound, Toronto, to Kingston and it reads as follows.

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario’s cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

“Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario’s inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks’ table.

PRIVATE MEMBERS’ PUBLIC BUSINESS

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

Mr. Robert Bailey: I move that, in the opinion of this House, if Bill 183, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009 passes as written, no representative of corporations or trade unions that made donations to Working Families shall be appointed as members of the board of the college of trades.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bailey has moved private members’ notice of motion number 113.

Pursuant to standing order 98, Mr. Bailey, you have up to 12 minutes.

Mr. Robert Bailey: As you know, the House is currently waiting for the government to call for third reading of Bill 183, the college of trades act. Our party is concerned that the government is going to use the college of trades to pay back trade unions and others who provided resources to the Working Families Coalition, which our party believes was nothing —

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Bailey, you might want to withdraw what you said and perhaps rephrase it.

Mr. Robert Bailey: —is going to use the college of trades to reward trade unions and others who provided resources to working families, which our party believes is nothing more than an advertising front for the Liberal

Party of Ontario. I think everyone needs to be reminded just what role Working Families has played in the last couple of elections in Ontario. In 2007, Working Families ran a \$5-million advertising campaign supporting the current government. According to the Toronto Star, 88% of the funding came from organizations supported by this organization.

During the election and since, our party has contended that Working Families was nothing but a front organization run by the McGuinty Liberals as a way to get around election financing laws. As members know, parties are limited to what they can spend; however, third parties are not. A third party group can spend what they want, and they gave the Liberals a huge advantage in the last two campaigns.

The people behind Working Families were all former key McGuinty campaign aides. Mr. Marcel Weider’s company, Arrow Communications, was working both for the Liberal party of Ontario and Working Families. Mr. Weider was publicly identified as a consultant working for Working Families, helping them to develop their communications strategy.

Now, it’s worth pointing out that according to the public accounts, this company has made out pretty good as well. As a matter of fact, Arrow was a supplier to the Ontario Liberal caucus and the government of Ontario in each fiscal year.

Another publicly identified key resource for Working Families was Pollara Inc. Actually, according to the Daily Commercial News, Pollara was one of the three firms that created and coordinated the communications strategy for the coalition. Again, according to the public accounts of Ontario, Pollara has been a supplier to the Liberal caucus and the government of Ontario. Some of those stats are as follows: In 2003, it was retained by the coalition to provide public opinion services. The Daily Commercial News identified Pollara as one of the three firms that created and coordinated this research starting in 2003. Jodi Shanoff, a vice-president of public affairs, was also identified as a key strategist for the coalition.

The Working Families Coalition helped tremendously in the election of the McGuinty Liberals in 2003. Unfortunately for the taxpayers of Ontario, that mere \$5 million that the Working Families Coalition sponsors invested in 2003 has been paid back many times over to the sponsors, using your tax dollars, ladies and gentlemen.

As Ian Urquhart of The Toronto Star noted, all of the sponsors of the Working Families Coalition “have reasons to be thankful to the governing Liberals for either increasing spending in their area or changing laws and regulations to their liking.”

Just who are these Working Family Coalition sponsors? On the Working Families Coalition website there are nine unions who were the official sponsors of Working Families, and there are three non-construction unions: the Ontario English Catholic Teachers’ Association, the Canadian Auto Workers and the Ontario Secondary School Teachers’ Federation. The remaining five unions

were linked through the Ontario Building Trades and Construction Council, commonly referred to as the building trades. Those are the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the millwrights, the International Union of Operating Engineers, painters district council 46 and the Ontario Pipe Trades Council.

What have the trades received? Well, Pat Dillon, the spokesperson for Working Families, is also the business manager of the Ontario Building Trades. Pat Dillon said, "The building trades have done exceptionally well with the Ontario Liberals since 2003." He also, incidentally, is now a member of the board of directors of the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board. Some other benefits received by these construction unions include a skilled training infrastructure program of \$25 million in 2007.

Union-run skills training centres are very different from the community college training centres. The community colleges are open to all Ontarians. The union-run training halls, however, exclude all Ontarians except those belonging to that union. Regardless of this fact, in 2007 the government of Ontario bestowed the building trades union and affiliated trade centres with some \$25 million from this program.

Bill 144, the Labour Relations Statute Law Amendment: The McGuinty government introduced and adopted this bill with scarcely any consultation, and it provided the building trades with significant new advantages in the certification process that are in direct contrast with the McGuinty Liberals' promise to fix the "democratic deficit" in this province.

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These new powers have resulted in a number of certifications that probably would not have occurred under the old rule. In addition, Bill 144 did not address two significant problems, of which the government is aware, that continue to give construction unions unfair advantages over the working lives of construction workers who have not chosen to join a trade union.

The "non-construction employer" definition: The McGuinty government continues to allow municipalities, retailers and other companies that are clearly not in the construction industry to be certified by these unions by a very narrow interpretation of the "non-construction employer" definition. This results in a situation where two employees, for example, on a municipal job site can get a construction union certification in place so that thousands of employees who do not belong to a trade union are prohibited from working on that municipality's project. This drives up construction prices to municipalities, such as the city of Toronto, by hundreds of millions of dollars every year.

The timing of the application: The McGuinty Liberals did not fix the procedural ruling of the labour board that uses the number of employees working on the date of the certification as the basis for determining union support. They knew that if they filed an application on a day when a job site is short-staffed and when enough of those employees have signed membership cards, the board will not consider the wishes of the tens or even hundreds of

employees who may have worked the day before the application or the day after. This is undemocratic and not in the public's best interest, yet the McGuinty Liberals did nothing to correct it.

The Canadian Federation of Independent Business said at the time Bill 144 was passed that "the government has shown that it is more concerned with paying back its union buddies than in developing sound public policy that would bolster economic growth."

Since the 2007 election, this government has continued to show that it is willing to say thank you for that \$5 million worth of advertising that the Working Families Coalition put up for them. Instead of fixing problems with the WSIB, this government made it mandatory for all executive officers of any construction company, small or large, to get WSIB coverage at an estimated cost, as I remember the numbers from the debate, of \$11,000 per business—which, during this time of recession, is going to be a very big impediment on any business.

Why are we concerned about Bill 183 being used as a way to reward Working Families? Well, Bill 183, the college of trades act, is designed to ensure quality training for our tradespeople. In order for the college to be effective, the government has given broad powers and a broad mandate to modernize these trades. Our long-standing position on this side of the House, as a party, has been, over time, to reduce the ratio of apprentices to journeypersons from three to one, to one to one as in many other jurisdictions. The college has been given the authority to do this if they feel it is necessary.

We believe that by reducing this apprenticeship ratio to where it's warranted, we will be able to have a highly skilled workforce that we need to compete in today's global economy. In fact, during some debates on this in committee, a number of employers came forward and said that they would like to hire people but they can't because they can't get enough journeypersons to put on the job to staff it. And a number of people who wanted to work—young people—also approached us and said that they were unable to obtain employment because of these ratios.

The construction trades have long defended the higher apprentice-to-journeyperson ratio, and if they are the only ones put in charge of the college of trades, the chances of changing this ratio would probably be greatly reduced.

I'm going to read a letter that our party submitted. We also had some concerns with Elections Ontario, and we did request an investigation of the Liberal Party campaign spending through its agent, the Working Families Coalition. I won't read the whole letter—my time is limited—but a summary, and relief sought:

"There is strong"—and I know the members opposite will want to hear this—"prima facie evidence that the coalition is not a third party and is more accurately described as an agent acting on behalf of the Ontario Liberal Party. As such, these activities and advertising expenditures of the coalition during the 2003 election, and 2007, contravene the Election Finances Act, as the

coalition's activities were not properly disclosed as part of the Ontario Liberal Party's campaign filing.

"The coalition has recently launched a further multi-media campaign"—this is prior to the 2007 election—"including televised advertising for the upcoming election. Unless immediate action is taken by you, consistent with your statutory duties, the coalition's actions may again contravene election finances law." We know for a fact that that was the case, and we see the results of that today in this massive deficit that this province is going to be incurring for many years to come. In closing—I'd like to read a couple more aspects of this.

I guess, in my time remaining, I'll close by saying I'm concerned that in order for the college of trades to be seen to be neutral, if the college is stacked with Liberal friends and appointees and sycophants, there will be a credibility gap and it will be unable to administer and do the work that's so important to this province.

I look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased and honoured to stand in my place and comment on the motion brought by the member from Sarnia-Lambton, Mr. Bailey, about the trades and apprenticeship act, 2009, if the act passes as written. I listened to him carefully. I know that the member from Sarnia-Lambton, on a personal level, is a great man, but he's bringing a very radical, very undemocratic motion. When I read the whole motion, I was surprised that a member of this House who believes in the democratic process could come up with the idea to ban people who donate to certain organizations or unions from participating on the board and the commissions.

As you know, we have almost 600-and-change agencies and commissions to oversee the conduct of trades and organizations across the province of Ontario, and the majority of those people are appointed by the tradespeople. Also, the government has some say and appoints some to represent the government and the public on those boards.

We have a committee to oversee the conduct of those appointments and to review those appointments. This committee is chaired by the Conservative caucus member from Oxford, Mr. Hardeman, and vice-chaired by Lisa MacLeod, another Conservative member, to review all the appointments and see the eligibility and qualifications of the people who are going to be appointed to those commissions, agencies and boards across Ontario.

We enjoy democracy in this province. Everyone has different directions and ideologies, different approaches and philosophies. That's why every one of us enjoys those directions with freedom, and we have the right to represent ourselves in the way we want, according to the law and the Constitution of this land.

The trade unions and the unions have, in the past, supported many different parties. They supported the Conservatives one time; they've supported the NDP and the Liberals. It depends on the policies each party comes up with. That's why I think it would be undemocratic to ban

any member from participating in and being a member of a board or trade commission.

I want to say openly to my colleague from Sarnia-Lambton that I hope he changes his mind after this debate. I think he believes in democracy and the democratic approach. We shouldn't be banning anyone from participating on the boards. Every one of us brings different views.

Our government committed to invest in skills and trades in Ontario, because we believe strongly that tradespeople and skilled people in Ontario will help us to maintain our prosperity and continue to build this beautiful province. That's why last September we decided to create that college: to give the trades and skills some kind of classification, an uplift in the eyes of people. As you know, when you have a kid who wants to go to college or be a tradesperson, the perception is not that great. People say it's better to be a doctor, engineer, professor or pharmacist because those have social status in our communities. By establishing this college, we will give the trades and skilled people across Ontario a lift. We'll give them some kind of special status in people's perceptions and create different perceptions. We need them badly in this province.

I was going to review how much we invested in the skills and trades centres in Ontario. I discovered that in the riding of the member who introduced this motion, we invested more than \$100,000 in the Sarnia training centre. In Waterloo, where the Conservative member from Kitchener-Waterloo is from, we invested \$246,000. In Burlington, with Mrs. Savoline representing the area, we invested \$627,000. And in Oshawa, same story. So we invested millions of dollars in centres that don't belong to Liberal members because we don't believe in ideology and party lines when we invest in skills and trades in the province of Ontario.

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We believe strongly in the people of this province despite their colour, despite their age, despite their party affiliation. We believe in people who can deliver the goods for us, who can work on any level, who are able to deliver their skills and utilize their efforts and intelligence to help the province. We continue to invest in this area because we believe strongly that this is an important area for all of us.

That's why I'm against the motion. I'm going to vote against it because I believe this motion is undemocratic. Every person, despite his or her ideology, should be allowed to run for office, should be allowed to be on the board, because it's important for all of us to bring all the skills together because we need them all.

Again, I hope all the members of this House will join me and vote against this motion because this motion is undemocratic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to say from the outset that I will not be supporting this motion. I understand what the member is getting at; I just find it a bit

disturbing and I have to admit that. What is says is, "No representative of corporations or trade unions that made donations to Working Families shall be appointed as members of the board of the college of trades." It speaks to a little problemo here. It says, "If they don't support me and my party, but they supported another party, it's wrong and they should not derive any benefit whatsoever," which suggests that if the Tories were elected, they would only support the people who supported them and anyone who opposed them wouldn't get any funding. It doesn't make any sense as a motion, and it speaks badly of your party, member from Sarnia-Lambton, and it worries me; I have to tell you that.

I have to say, as far as I know, I don't think I personally got money from the coalition.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Oh, yes, you did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Tony, I don't believe I got any money from the coalition. You were the largest recipient of that largesse, if not the only recipient. I don't mean you alone, member from Parkdale; I mean your party.

But that's neither here nor there. This is democracy, the way it works. People set themselves up under whatever name they want, and then they support whatever party they want. I may not be the recipient of that kindness or largesse, and God bless, you do what you can, you do your best. The Liberals benefit from that, God bless. New Democrats did not and Tories did not, but am I going to say, because they contributed to your party, the Liberal Party, that these folks should not be represented at all on that board? I'm not going to say that.

I know that the Conservative Party has a serious problem with this college of trades. I'm not going to speak too long about the college of trades or what amendments were made or what amendments I introduced that were supported or not supported, because we're going to be able to debate the college of trades for third reading soon and that will give me an opportunity to have a whole hour to debate that more thoroughly. That's not what is before us.

I know that the member, in committee, raised the issue of ratios. I know that he and his party want to reduce the ratios in the apprenticeship programs, which currently stand, in many apprenticeship programs, as a three-to-one ratio of journeypersons to apprentices, and it varies from trade to trade. It could be four to one, five to one or two to one, and in some cases it's three to one. The point about ratios is that it's mostly about safety and making sure that the training an apprentice is getting is the kind that permits him or her to do their job well and do it safely and in a safe environment. Those are the ratio issues.

I know that Tories are opposed to it, and this motion gives them a reason to talk about that. That's fine; they will have an opportunity to say those things in third reading debate. But that's not really what the motion is about. It's about attacking Working Families in general and in specifics. While I understand that they have opinions about that and they're unhappy about the fact

that this coalition didn't support them, I'm not quite sure how that relates at all to this college of trades.

The college of trades was set up on the recommendation of Mr. Armstrong, who recommended that the ministry "consult with stakeholders with the objective of establishing a new, all-trades governing institution—the college of trades—whose functions would include the establishment of expert panels to consider applications for compulsory certification and provide advice to the minister; to engage in certification enforcement; to raise the profile and status of the trades; and provide for periodic review(s) of ratio provisions." Ratio provisions are part of this bill. An impartial board made up of experts will deal with it and comment on what those ratios are. I think that is a reasonable thing to do.

This college is going to have the responsibility of promoting the trades. I hope it does that, and I hope it does that well. I'm not sure whether it will have the money to promote itself, but we hope it will. In my view, this Liberal government has not promoted the trades very well. In fact, when we talk about Second Career, a program that was established a year and a half ago by this government—they talked about a second career program to give an opportunity to those who were unemployed to get into another trade. We attacked the government and the minister because in the early months of that program—within six months—they had only gotten about 11,100 registrants into the program.

We attacked it because the program was structured in such a way as to limit the number of applications. We did not attack the program on the basis that it was a bad idea, because in a climate of high unemployment when so many are looking for opportunities, particularly when they're laid off, we need to be able to provide every possible way to re-establish those workers in a different field, to reconnect them to a different field so that they can find gainful employment that would allow them, as men and women, to be able to earn a decent living. You cannot do it while you're unemployed, and you cannot do it in a climate where so many manufacturing jobs are disappearing. So why would we not support a program such as Second Career?

Our attack on the government was that the conditions were so restrictive that it only allowed 11,000 or so—11,100—to apply to get into such a program. When we criticized the government consistently about that particular issue, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities finally relented, perhaps nudged by the Premier, to expand the criteria to allow more and more to opt in to such a program. Once the criteria were relaxed, we now learn that 20,000 or so have applied for such a program and that it has been so successful that the government has decided that it is going to streamline and restructure it.

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What that means is that in order to make it sustainable, the government is going to have to cut back and make it restrictive once again, as it did in the previous year. That's what they're doing. At a time when we need to enhance that program, expand it, allow more and more un-

employed to take advantage of a second career opportunity, this government is going to make it, so-called, sustainable by making sure fewer people are able to apply, and while some government members are saying they're providing more money, whatever money they're providing will only support those applicants who made an application in June, and possibly July. But those who applied to get into that program in September and October cannot get in, and new applicants will have to wait until January.

This government doesn't have a great record on this—it doesn't. In all the training programs this government has had, they were obsessed with the idea of registrants rather than how many people are able to complete the program. We know that the majority of people who went into those apprenticeship programs did not complete the program, which is what it should be about. It shouldn't be about obsession with registration; it should be about an obsession that those who joined the program were able to complete it. There's no great record here; there's none to talk about. That's the story we should be talking about. So, when we talk about the college of trades—it does have some deficiencies you can talk about—talk about those. That's what we should be talking about.

If you feel strongly about the ratios, make your motion about ratios and why you somehow feel this new board is not going to deal with it. But it will deal with it. You may not agree—I might not even agree—with a conclusion this review panel will make, but I'm going to have to trust the fact that it's going to have experts in the trades with others on that review panel who are going to make wise judgements about what that ratio should be. We're going to have to rely on that—we have to.

There are trade boards that are being established by this college of trades, and many tradesmen and tradeswomen will be represented. We hope they will be represented adequately and well, including other divisional boards. Yes, we know that the board is going to be appointed by an appointments council, and who knows who these folks are going to be? This is true. There are legitimate concerns, both from a New Democratic perspective and a Conservative perspective, in terms of who is likely going to be on that board. We might disagree, but we're going to have to wait and see, and deal with it as it comes. We, as critics, are going to have an opportunity to say, "Yeah, it worked okay," or, "It didn't work so well," and we'll have the opportunity to attack the government on a regular basis, as we always do in opposition.

I can't support this motion the way it's written. It is a bit risky, and the language is a bit dangerous in terms of what it says. I do not agree with the direction this is going, so I will be opposing it from a personal point of view.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate today. We're debating a private member's motion brought forward by the member from Sarnia-Lambton. I,

frankly, was quite surprised to see this when it came forward, because I thought the days were long, long behind us when we tried to ban certain members of our society from fully participating in the level of government they choose and for lending their expertise to areas where they may have that expertise.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: It's anti-democratic.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's very anti-democratic, and I'm really shocked to see it here, to be honest with you. I can't imagine that it's even constitutional. I'm not a lawyer, but it seems to me that all members of our society should be able to participate fully, especially working families. Working families are the backbone of our society. They should be allowed to participate fully in decisions that are being made by this government.

It's a pleasure, though. It gives us an opportunity to comment further on Bill 183, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act. I've said before, and I've heard it in my own communities and in other communities around Ontario, that there's an appetite for change today in the world of work. There's an appetite for change among the apprentices who are learning new skills in our society, among the tradespeople and journeypersons who are participating in the workforce today and among the trade unions themselves, and certainly the employers in this province are saying, "We need skilled workers. We need to keep up with the economy of the future."

So it's clear that we've got a need to address the shortage of workers in the skilled trades right here in Ontario, and if we're able to do that, that's very good for business. Previous governments have tried to do this. They've met with some success, and they've met with some failure. I think this is a progressive step that's going to allow us to move forward. We're taking, I think, a number of progressive steps in order to do this. One of those initiatives is what we have before us today in one form, and that is the decision to create a college of trades. What that does is give some recognition to the trades that is long overdue, and it's a subject actually of the member from Sarnia-Lambton's motion today. I think what he's doing is taking an initiative that I think has met with a lot of success in the community. We've had amendments come forward certainly from our side of the House and amendments come forward from the member from Trinity-Spadina that were supported at the committee level. What we tried to do was take the input we received from stakeholders and craft an even better bill, and I think we've done this.

What the college is going to do is promote involvement in the trades amongst young people, promote the concept of a career in the skilled trades, and it's going to modernize the apprenticeship system that we have here in the province. But it's also going to ensure that Ontario skilled trades continue to serve and protect the public interest and meet the growing needs of the economy.

There's no reason to believe that the college of trades, the trade unions themselves, or the trades themselves, don't deserve the same consideration that we currently

extend to teachers, doctors and nurses. If you're going to encourage young people to enter the trades, certainly you have to give the trades the recognition that they deserve—and that's exactly what this does. It's going to help promote the skilled trades as careers and make sure that the proper training is applied and is made available to those young people to decide the trades are actually careers for them.

Our government has made investing in its apprenticeship program in skilled trades a priority—simply because it is a financial imperative; we need to do it. We've almost doubled the number of apprentices currently being trained. Right now, in the province of Ontario, there are 120,000 apprentices being trained for work in the skilled trades. It has almost doubled since 2002; in seven or eight short years, it has almost doubled.

New apprenticeship registrations are growing. We had more than 28,000 in 2008-09. We've extended tax credits to 2012. Seventy-one of our district school boards around the province are participating in the Ontario youth apprenticeship program. That's over 25,000 students expected to participate this year in Ontario youth apprenticeship programs.

It's a clear sign that we're starting to make inroads. Young people are starting to realize that trades are perhaps the route for them in a career and that they can have a good lifestyle, they can afford the things they want in our society, they can earn a decent wage, and they can put the skills they have to use in our society to help build a much stronger Ontario, and that helps address the shortage we have of skilled workers.

It's a shame that the official opposition doesn't share that. It is a shame, because I think if we sat down, we'd realize that it is a part of our economy that we need to address. Instead, we get a motion put before us like this, that says if you are part of a working family, if you are part of an organization called Working Families, you're not allowed to participate in the same way that any other member of our society would be allowed to participate in this college. That is simply wrong.

Whatever your ideological point of view is towards trade unions, towards management and employer relations, trying to ban a number of people in our society from participating in what is a new and exciting initiative like the college of trades is simply not the Canadian way of doing things.

I was very shocked to see this come forward. I'm not sure if the member was put up to it or if this was his own idea, but those weren't the sort of comments we were getting at the committee from this member. There was an opportunity to bring the idea forward then. Instead, the member, I think, was trying to be as progressive as he could in his comments towards the college of trades. This comes as a little bit of a shock, and I would ask the member to reconsider its presence on the floor here today.

Ontario supports its working families. It always has. Ontario's working families expect support from their levels of government, and this certainly runs contrary to

that. I would ask all members of the House to oppose this motion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: At the outset, I want to make it very clear that I will not be supporting this motion by my colleague from Sarnia—Lambton. I also want to make it very clear that we are gathered here today, this afternoon, in private members' business, which allows for individuals members of this House to bring forward matters of business that they feel strongly about, that they feel should be debated. This is not—certainly on the part of our caucus—an official opposition position, as the former speaker referred to it.

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I know that my colleague from Trinity—Spadina, in his comments as well, made reference to the PC caucus position on this. I want to make it very clear that this is not a PC caucus position either. It is the right of the member from Sarnia—Lambton to bring it forward. We are debating it. I am debating it. I'm debating it because I want to make it very clear that I do not support it.

I do want to recognize the member's intention, however. I believe that the member, knowing him as I do, is wanting to, perhaps in his own way, warn the government and essentially give caution to the government as well as the college that its very effectiveness is going to be dependent on the integrity of the people who sit on that board and who will be making very important decisions about a very important sector of our economy, namely the trades. The last thing that we want is for this college to, in any way, have its integrity undermined or the decisions that it makes questioned because of a perception that perhaps the decisions are unduly influenced, perhaps by a particular segment, by a particular group of people.

In this particular case, the resolution makes reference—and I'll read it from the motion—to an organization called Working Families. The member opposite—I'm trying to find his riding—Oakville. Yes, Mr. Flynn, the member from Oakville—sorry—referred to "working families" in the generic sense. That is not what this resolution refers to. It does refer to a very specific organization that is well organized, that was highly funded in previous elections, that, according to their own claims, had a significant impact on the outcome of the last couple of elections.

I believe that any organization has the right to be engaged and should be engaged in the political process. So one of the reasons that I'm not supporting this motion is because I don't want in any way to send a signal to say that anyone in this province should somehow be excluded from expressing their opinions, from being engaged in the political process. In fact, I have spent my political career for the last 35 years encouraging people to become engaged in the political process. In fact, on the back of my business card I have the words inscribed, "If you don't become involved in the political process, you are destined to be governed by those who do." It's on the

back of every one of my cards. When I hand my card out, I hand it out with that phrase pointing out so that people would actually look at it.

So, whether people are involved in unions or other organizations, I think, without question, they have the right to be involved. However, there is, I believe, a side to this that deserves our attention and that we should be cautious about, and that is, if a particular organization makes significant financial contributions to any political party, there is always the caution that must be raised, and that is that there is not undue influence in terms of the policy decisions that that government then makes or a political party takes in terms of a policy position, if it isn't in the public interest. So I believe that what the member is saying is, given the track record of the organization called Working Families, we need to be concerned.

I'm going to just make very quick reference, for example, to an article that was written by Ian Urquhart. In his article at the time, and I quote for the benefit of people who are watching this debate so that it may help them understand my colleague's position on this a little better: "The ads"—these are the ads he's referring to now placed by this organization called Working Families—"not only tore a strip off Eves; they also allowed Dalton McGuinty and the Liberals to take the high road with a positive campaign, in the knowledge that the dirty work was being done for them by the coalition."

When you look at the coalition and you look at the members of the coalition, without question the vast majority of that membership are, in fact, unions, right across the board, and they're very broadly represented there. So I think, to the point of my colleague, there is a caution that's being put forward to say, "Look, let's ensure that this college, the Ontario college of trades and apprenticeship, can, in fact, do its job without any implication of a lack of integrity." I have confidence that it will.

Whether someone is a member of a union or any organization, first of all, doesn't mean that they necessarily share all of the tenets of the leadership of that organization, it doesn't mean that they will not make independent decisions as members of another organization, it doesn't mean that they won't put their profession first and foremost in terms of what is the right thing to do, and there is a process that is going to be followed in terms of appointing the various members of the board.

I think the very fact that this debate has taken place is also sending a signal to those who will have the responsibility to make these decisions, and in the end I'm hopeful and I believe that it will have a positive effect.

I'll conclude my remarks by simply saying that—and I want to underscore it again—I understand the intent, but I disagree with the way that this resolution has been brought forward, which is why I won't be supporting it. I know that members here also will understand that this is not a caucus position, it is not a party position; it is the initiative of one individual, one member of this House,

who has the right to have his say, and he has done that today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to thank all of the speakers who commented today: the members from London—Fanshawe, Trinity—Spadina, Oakville and Newmarket—Aurora. Yes, the one thing today that was the main goal was to get the intent of my concern about the inference—I would like to just make sure that I correct the record as well. I did speak in committee in favour of the Ontario College of Trades. I, over the years, have belonged to two trade unions myself: one, a construction union in the past and, more recently, the Communications, Energy and Paperworkers Union. I helped—was an organizer as well.

My intent was to draw the connection that somewhere down the road, this college of trades wouldn't be called into question—any decisions that they make, any rulings that they make—because of this undue influence that money perhaps could have had or has had in elections. It's on the record. They themselves, the people who were principals in this coalition, have said—and bragged, in fact—that they had great impact, that they've bought influence, in their words, in future decisions.

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My concern is that this be put on the record so that it would be a cautionary note, both for the organizations as they go forward and this college—which I believe in very much, because we are going to need those kinds of skills as we go forward—so that when any decisions are made they think about that, and that the government, in any appointments they make, also take these into account so that nobody can misrepresent and misunderstand any decisions that are made.

So, if anything, today it has got on the record. It was a position of my own, nothing to do with my caucus or party. It was a decision that I made. I was quite concerned, during the last couple of elections. I watched the way the advertising and things were going on from the Working Families Coalition. I had some concerns about that, so I thought this was an opportunity to bring this forward as a private member's resolution.

I'd like to thank all of the members for their kindness and understanding and also for their comments to me at this time.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): If the honourable member would like, you do have two further minutes for your response. That's fine?

We'll vote on this item in about 100 minutes.

ONTARIO POET LAUREATE

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should establish the position of Ontario Poet Laureate to promote art and literacy in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kwinter moves private member's notice of motion number 114.

Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Since I gave notice that I was going to be introducing this bill, I've had several people come up to me and say, "Why are you involved in this particular aspect of our society?" They obviously didn't know my background, because when you take a look at the motion, it talks about the fact that it promotes art and literacy in Ontario, and I happen to have a very strong background in both. Plus, I'm going to tie it in to the fact that it's of economic benefit to the province.

Again, some may not know, but I'm a graduate of the Ontario College of Art. I have been the vice-president of the Ontario College of Art. I got a bachelor of fine arts degree from Syracuse University. I attended the Institute of Contemporary Art in Boston. I have been on the board of governors of the Ontario College of Art and Design, and I have an honorary doctorate from the Ontario College of Art and Design.

All of that gives me a background in the arts and one that, just by coincidence, also ties in to that of literacy, in that some 50-odd years ago I was the editorial director of a publishing company in Montreal that published 13 magazines, including one called the *Montrealer*. I had the opportunity of having a freelance writer come to see me monthly to try to sell me an article for \$25, which I gladly paid at the time, and that happened to be Mordecai Richler. So that was an opportunity for me to see the literary side and the artistic side.

On a personal note, my wife and I, literally from the day we were married, have been devotees of the cryptic crossword puzzle. If you know anything about cryptic puzzles, they're not regular puzzles; they're ones where you have to really determine the meaning of the word they're looking for. It's a challenge. We do them every single day. So I'm just trying to establish my bona fides.

To get to the connection between art and literacy and the Poet Laureate, I want to give you an overview of what the cultural community means to Ontario.

Ontario's highest priority is to build a stronger, more competitive economy. The province's cultural sector plays a key role in helping us to meet this goal. Ontario's cultural sector accounts for nearly \$20 billion of our provincial GDP. It's also one of the fastest-growing sectors of the economy. Between 1999 and 2007, it created over 80,000 net new jobs in Ontario. This is an increase of almost 40%, compared with 17% in the overall Ontario economy. Strategic investments in our cultural industries can generate significant revenues and help drive innovations.

The Ontario Arts Council, an agency of the Ministry of Culture, has developed literature programs to encourage the development, publication and presentation of new works of literary significance in the province. The OAC's literature office funds writers, storytellers and spoken word artists in all forms. Some of these literacy programs include reading clubs, literacy camps, book drives, reading and writing workshops, literacy tutoring, outreach programs, resource centres, book fairs and festivals,

storytelling, coaching programs, culturally sensitive literacy for francophone, aboriginal and ethno-cultural communities.

The government of Ontario, through the Ontario Media Development Corp. supports the Trillium Book Award/Prix Trillium. The Trillium Book Award/Prix Trillium encourages excellence in literature through its significant investment in Ontario-based writers. Each year, three titles are short-listed for the Trillium Book Award for poetry in English language, which recognizes literary achievement for first, second or third published work of poetry. Three titles are also short-listed for the Trillium Book Award for children's literature and French language, which is awarded in alternating years with the Trillium Book Award for poetry in the French language. The winner for each of these awards receives \$10,000 and their publisher \$2,000 for a promotion of the titles, and finalists for these awards also receive a \$500 honorarium.

Now we get to the gist of this motion, which is to establish a Poet Laureate for Ontario. Poet Laureate is the title conferred in Britain by the monarch on a poet whose duty it is to write commemorative odes and verse. It's an outgrowth of the medieval English custom of having versifiers and minstrels in the King's retinue and of the later royal patronage of poets such as Chaucer and Spenser.

On December 18, 2001, the office of the Parliamentary Poet Laureate was given royal assent in the federal Parliament. Just by coincidence, this particular bill, Bill S-10, was sponsored by Senator Jerry Grafstein. Jerry and I have been friends for over 50 years; he's a neighbour of mine. Until I got involved in this resolution, I had no idea that he was behind this particular bill.

The Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate is appointed as an officer of the Library of Parliament. The position alternates between an English- and French-speaking laureate each term and candidates must be able to write in both English and French, must have a substantial publication history displaying literary excellence, including poetry, and must have work written reflecting Canada, among other criteria.

The first-ever Canadian Parliamentary Poet Laureate was awarded to George Bowering in 2002; in 2004, the title was transferred to Pauline Michel; and in 2006 to John Steffler. His term ended on December 3, 2008, and nominations for the position were opened to residents of Canada up to September 2008. Pierre DesRuisseaux was named the new laureate on April 28.

In his speech, when the bill was tabled in the Senate, Senator Grafstein wrote—and I want to quote him because I think he says it a lot better than I could. It says, "The great English poet, William Blake, was often quoted ... in the British House of Commons.... The power of poetry is potent. Everything we do here is based on words. Words are the only business of parliamentarians. Some argue Parliament ... works in a cocoon, immune to the realities of life since Parliament can deal mostly in laws that please the largest numbers. The Poet Laureate

can place a mirror before Canadians that refracts different images of life. He can parse our common lexicon in different ways. We need diversity of thought to create a unity of dreams and a unity of visions. Poetry might even add some greater sense and sensibility to the word factory of Canada—to our Parliament. Poetry might bring fresh realities, new light, to the very heart of the Canadian soul, wherever it may reside.”

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What is the mandate of the federal Poet Laureate? I should tell you that there are various jurisdictions around the world that have appointed Poet Laureates. It is to write poetry for use in Parliament on important occasions, to sponsor poetry readings, to advise the parliamentary librarian regarding the library's collection and acquisition to enrich its cultural materials, perform other related duties at the request of the Speaker or the parliamentary librarian, and give an annual lecture and reading of his or her poetry. Often a Poet Laureate will create a legacy project during that term.

When we talk about words, the interesting thing—and there's an old saying that, “The pen is mightier than the sword.” I want to quote a very famous speech. As a matter of fact, it's rated as one of the most famous speeches ever made, and it was made by Abraham Lincoln in his Gettysburg address. He followed Edward Everett, who was the main speaker at this event. The speaker, Mr. Everett, delivered a two-hour, 13,607-word oration. Lincoln spoke for under three minutes and summarized the war in 10 sentences. It began:

“Fourscore and seven years ago, our fathers brought forward on this continent a new nation conceived in liberty and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”

Later on in his speech, he went on to say, “The world will little note nor long remember what we say here, but it can never forget what they did here.” The irony of that situation is that it was just the opposite: that nobody knew exactly, unless you're a historian, what was going on at Gettysburg. But those particular words still ring out.

A very famous story that I want to relate also gives you the impact of what literacy and poetry can bring to the human experience, and this is a story of perhaps the most famous war poem of all time. In the second week of fighting during the second battle of Ypres, a Canadian artillery officer, Lieutenant Alexis Helmer, was killed on May 2, 1915, by a German artillery shell. He was a friend of the great Canadian military doctor Major John McCrae. John was asked to conduct a burial service owing to the chaplain being called away on duty elsewhere. It is believed that, later that evening, John began the draft for his famous poem “In Flanders Fields.”

We are coming up to November 11 shortly, on Remembrance Day, and ceremonies across Canada undoubtedly will be, in fact, reciting “In Flanders Fields.” That poem was also reputedly the genesis for having the poppy as the symbol of the Remembrance Day service.

That is just an overview of why I think it's important that we bring forward and give credence to a Poet

Laureate who can, in fact, reflect on what is happening in the country, can get into the schools, can relate the power of the written word, to do the things that will enhance our quality of life and, as an added benefit, get us to the point where we can become creative and we can benefit through the economic stimulus that the cultural centre and the cultural industries are providing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I'm certainly very pleased to speak in favour of the motion that has been put forward by my colleague Mr. Kwinter today, October 22, “That, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should establish the position of Ontario Poet Laureate to promote art and literacy in Ontario.”

As a former English teacher, I obviously wholeheartedly support this motion. I would also say to you, as someone who enjoyed studying literature and learning poetry when I was at school, I'm really quite pleased to see the establishment of this position.

I think we've heard a little bit of what happens elsewhere. We know that in the federal House, they did create the position of Poet Laureate in 2001. It was intended to bring Canadians' attention to poetry, both the spoken and the written word, and also to be able to demonstrate the role it has had in our lives. Of course, today we do have a national, two provincial and many municipal Poet Laureates across the country; however, no other province as large as ours has created the role of Poet Laureate to this date.

So this person would have a significant role. They would serve as literary ambassador. They would be an advocate for poetry, for language and for the arts, which certainly is important, and they would be in a position where they could promote art and culture within their community. I know that, on occasion, some of these individuals are encouraged, or they are required, to write poems for special occasions, and I'm going to refer to that a little bit later when I talk about the inaugural of President Kennedy.

The Poet Laureate obviously concentrates on their own body of work, and of course they share that with the community, so it is a significant role. If I take a look at my own community and I take a look at the support that my community provides for art and for literacy, certainly this is exactly what my community would be supportive of. In fact, last night I had the pleasure to attend the opening of a new museum in the city of Waterloo. It is the very first museum, and it's obviously going to have the opportunity to record the rich heritage and the legacy of our community. We're going to be in a position where we can share that with future generations in order that our children and our grandchildren can take a look at where the city has been and also, based upon the past, perhaps get some indication of where the community is going.

Last night, some members of the Seagram family were present. The Seagrams have had a very important role in the history of our community, and certainly life there has been influenced.

Our community has also been influenced by the many immigrants who have come to Kitchener–Waterloo. We have the Germans. We recently celebrated Oktoberfest. The culture and the heritage of our community has been very much influenced by the German community. Of course, we currently have a very multicultural community, and our community is enriched by the past and also by those who are coming in the present.

But let's take a look at the position and let's take a look at who else has Poet Laureates.

We've got Prince Edward Island. We've got Saskatchewan. We've got the Yukon. We've got municipalities throughout Canada that have these individuals. The term seems to vary. The Canadian Poet Laureate is a two-year term, Toronto's is a three-year term, and the term of the American Poet Laureate is one year with the possibility of a reappointment.

What about the role of this individual in different jurisdictions? Well, in Canada, the individual is required to encourage and promote the importance of literature, culture and language in Canadian society. The one in Toronto serves as the city's literary ambassador, and the mandate also includes the creation of a legacy project that will be unique to the individual. In the city of Edmonton, Alberta, the Poet Laureate is to reflect the life of Edmonton through readings of poetry. And the objectives of the Prince Edward Island Poet Laureate program include the opportunity to celebrate Prince Edward Island and its people, to raise the profile of poets and poetry in general, to promote a higher standard of literacy, and to provide for the expression of culture and heritage through the literary arts.

In the United States, the Poet Laureate, again, seeks to raise the national consciousness to a greater appreciation of the reading and the writing of poetry.

1510

Now, what I found quite intriguing was to take a look at some of the famous Poets Laureate from the past. If you take a look at the United Kingdom, you would see that in 1843, William Wordsworth was the Poet Laureate; in 1850, Alfred Tennyson. Of course, we all remember the lines from one of his poems:

Tis better to have loved and lost
Than never to have loved at all.

In the United States, we had Robert Frost in 1958. He was one of the most famous American poets, a four-time Pulitzer Prize winner for poetry. I can remember, when I was chair of the Waterloo school board, that we actually took a few lines from one of his poems and used those as our vision for taking a look at where we were going to take the children and students within our board. We used as our theme:

Two roads diverged in a wood, and I,
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

So I think people today still like to take a look at poetry. People use poetry, oftentimes, when they're delivering addresses. That's where I want to go now, to Robert Frost, because Robert Frost became the very first

poet to read in the program of a presidential inauguration in 1961.

The decision was made at that time to include Frost in the inauguration, because they wanted to focus attention on Kennedy as a man of culture as well as a man interested in culture. Kennedy's decision to include Frost was, I think, to a large measure as well, a personal gesture to the poet who was responsible for much of the momentum early in the President's campaign.

What Frost had done, which I don't think people remember, is that on March 26, 1959, prior to a gala to celebrate his 85th birthday, he gave a press conference at the Waldorf Astoria in New York City. Among the questions asked was one where he responded, "The next President of the United States will be from Boston." Pressed to name the individual, he replied, "He's a puritan named Kennedy." The national press picked up his prediction that the junior senator from Massachusetts, who had not even formally declared his candidacy, would be elected the next President. Frost repeated this prediction in many, if not most, of the lectures and public appearances he gave over the subsequent months, and continued to endorse candidate Kennedy whenever he could. Kennedy, in turn, quoted from the final stanza of Frost's poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" at the close of many of his campaign speeches when he said,

But I have promises to keep,
And miles to go before I sleep.

Obviously, Frost was elated at the outcome, when he learned that Kennedy had indeed won the election.

Anyway, he was invited to the inauguration ceremonies. He responded that he would accept the honour to participate, and Kennedy said, "Would you recite a new poem?" As inauguration day approached, Frost did have a new poem, entitled "Dedication"—he later re-titled it "For John F. Kennedy His Inauguration"—and his plan was to read that as the preface to the poem Kennedy had requested. But on the drive to the Capitol on January 20, 1961, Frost—you have to remember he was now an older man—worried that the piece, which had been typed on one of the hotel typewriters the night before, was difficult to read, even in good light. And when he stood to read the poem, he was afraid that the wind and the bright reflection of sunlight off new-fallen snow would make the poem impossible to read—and that happened. Instead, he was able to recite *The Gift Outright* from memory.

Here is an example of a poet who obviously had a huge impact on the President of the United States, played a very significant role in his victory. And so today we are here, and if this is passed obviously we'll be in a position where we can be appointing Poets Laureate. No doubt they will be able to influence this province, the arts and literature, and certainly they are going to be in a position as well where they can promote the literature and the culture of Ontario. So I support this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's a pleasure to stand today and speak in support of this resolution that's before the House. It's a good motion, and it's one that all members of the New Democratic Party in this House will be supporting.

I'll just touch briefly on the history of Poets Laureate. The role was created to encourage and promote the importance of literature, culture and language within Canadian society by drawing the public's attention to poetry—both spoken and written—and to the nature of the need for poetry.

Many countries around the world, including the United Kingdom and the United States, have appointed official Poets Laureate. It's an honourable tradition and one that we in Ontario would benefit from following.

Canada's federal Poet Laureate position was established in 2001. Across Canada, there are now 19 Poets Laureate, including the federal parliamentary Poet Laureate, provincial Poets Laureate, and municipal Poets Laureate. Three provinces have Poets Laureate—PEI, Saskatchewan and the Yukon Territory. Numerous municipalities also have Poets Laureate, and that includes four in Ontario. Toronto, Brantford, Owen Sound and Cobalt all have Poets Laureate. Dionne Brand, an internationally renowned poet, essayist and novelist, was just appointed the Poet Laureate of Toronto.

Given the examples that exist across this country, indeed exist at the federal level, it makes complete sense that we here at the provincial level in Ontario should also appoint our own Poet Laureate. There is no question that the need to bring awareness of the rich world of poetry and literary pursuits in general to the populace as a whole is important. There are far too many children who grow up without this kind of exposure. Even more so, there are far too many artists who spend their entire lives perfecting their craft but who never receive recognition for their accomplishments. In Ontario, were we to have a Poet Laureate, we might well address some of these issues.

But I have to say to you, notwithstanding my support for the resolution, I think there are broader questions about support for the arts that remain to be answered, and as much as this is a worthy resolution, one that I intend to vote for, I think we have to consider the larger question of support for the arts and the role of the arts in this society, in this province. We in the NDP have long called for a number of steps forward for arts and artists in Ontario. We need to ensure that Ontarians who make their living in the arts and culture sector are entitled to the same basic employment protections as workers in every other sector across this province.

Currently, artists are excluded from the protection offered by the Employment Standards Act when the act could be amended very simply to ensure that artists are given the same protection as employees working in a variety of fields. I don't think anyone can argue that artists should not be entitled to the same protections—a minimum rate of pay, vacation with pay and overtime—that other Ontario workers enjoy.

1520

As you may well be aware and certainly as Mr. Kwinter is aware, we have an extraordinarily rich arts sector here in Ontario. I had the opportunity last week to attend the play *The Turn of the Screw* at Campbell House, down at University and Queen, staged by theatre company DVxT. An extraordinary production: two people carrying the whole story, playing all the characters, set in an 18th-century home. I have to say that that play, done in large chunks by candlelight in these rooms that reflected the era of the time, was very powerful, very moving, and spoke to and speaks to the ability of artists in this province to actually deliver an extraordinary product, an extraordinary piece of work to enrich our lives.

When you look at arts and culture as a whole in Ontario, the arts sector is worth about \$16 billion to our economy. It's a very big piece. Across Canada there are about 140,000 people who list art as their major occupation. About 40% of these people are Ontarians. Ontario has double the number of artists living in our province compared to any other province across the country: a very significant group of people who have a very rich contribution that they make to the lives of everyone in Ontario.

This is a big sector. It has a significant impact. It is of consequence. But in spite of this hefty contribution that is made—those statistics, the reality of their contribution—there's another story when it comes to the livelihood of those making up this industry, and that is of tremendous concern.

When we look at the statistics of whether this huge economic contribution actually benefits the very people making up the industry, we see a very disturbing answer. Artists in Ontario earn, on average, 38% less than other workers. It was acknowledged by the Minister of Culture's own advisory council in its 2006 report that the average annual earnings of Ontario artists is \$26,800, almost one quarter less than that of the overall labour force in Ontario. Artists in many Ontario cities earn less than \$20,000 per annum, despite the fact that the percentage of artists with post-secondary qualifications is nearly double that of the overall labour force.

I say to Mr. Kwinter: His resolution to provide for a provincial Poet Laureate may well further raise the profile of the arts and raise the profile of what I see as a very pressing issue: making sure that artists have enough income that in fact they can continue to carry on their craft and the work they do to enrich this province. In his resolution, not only do I see an advantage to the province in terms of having someone who thinks poetically about our direction and our everyday lives, but I also think it may be helpful in raising the profile of artists and their contribution.

The nature of work in the arts and culture sector means that 44% of Ontario artists are self-employed, compared to 7% of the overall labour force. This is a group—how can I best say it?—that is subject to a large volume of instability and insecurity.

I had the opportunity recently to go door to door in my riding and talk to my constituents, many of whom are artists who have found in the last few months that life has been far more difficult. I've talked to actors who have worked in film and television and found that they've once again become caterers. I'm sure they are very good caterers, but when you have a talent for projecting emotion, for representing a reality on film, to not be able to use that talent is just a simple waste, a tragic waste.

What we need in this province for the arts to thrive is a substantial investment in the arts and an understanding of the arts as a strategic part of our economy in the long term. We have a situation in Ontario where we can speak to a wide variety of audiences around the world in a wide variety of languages: French, English, Cantonese, Mandarin, Urdu, Hindi. We can speak to mass audiences over the Internet, electronically, with the base of talent that we have in this province in a way that, I think, few other countries can.

We have people in the arts with Asian backgrounds who run very successful theatrical programs; fu-GEN theatre company is holding a fundraising banquet this coming Monday. In the past, they successfully developed a variety of productions, including *Banana Boys*. This kind of artistic endeavour, backed by the provincial government, given the sort of support that we would see for other research and development, would do very well for us. It would give us yet another avenue for developing the economy of this province to go far beyond that \$16 billion that's already currently generated in the arts, culture and entertainment sector. It will give us outlets for our talents, for our carpenters, our electricians, our programmers, our Internet operators. We should not shy away from taking advantage of those opportunities.

In 2006, there was debate about status-of-the-artist legislation. There was a call on the part of artists for status-of-the-artist legislation in Ontario to mirror what was done at the federal level. What came forward in 2007, I believe, was an arts weekend. The recognition of an arts weekend was not adequate to the size of the sector, its importance to our economy, or its importance to our everyday life. What we do need in this province is status-of-the-artist legislation that actually gives artists greater security and the ability to negotiate collectively with arts engagers so they can improve their lives and, in fact, enrich the arts in this province.

Motions like the one before us are definitely good motions. They advance the arts. They advance recognition of the arts. But we need to go beyond that simple recognition. What we need is greater investment in and greater understanding of the strategic value of the arts. We need a very different approach in this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to rise in the House to support the motion by my friend Mr. Kwinter, that, in the opinion of this House, the Legislative Assembly of Ontario should establish the position of Ontario Poet Laureate to promote art and literacy in Ontario.

I must say, whenever I hear Mr. Kwinter speak, I'm always surprised to learn one more thing about his career. I never knew until today that, in a long list of accomplishments, he has acted as a magazine publisher. He's deep in conversation right now. But that's one more thing on the long list of achievements by Mr. Kwinter.

Today we're looking at this whole notion of a Poet Laureate for Ontario. The primary role of a Poet Laureate would be to serve as a literary ambassador and as an advocate for poetry, language and the arts. Poets Laureate around the world are used to promote art and culture within their communities. Some are encouraged, or required in some cases, to write poems for specific special occasions.

This is not a new notion. In Canada, we have a federal Poet Laureate. Several provinces and territories—Prince Edward Island, Saskatchewan, the Yukon—have Poets Laureate already. A number of municipalities across Canada have Poets Laureate—in Ontario, places as large as Toronto and as small as Cobalt in northern Ontario; in BC, Victoria, Vancouver and New Westminster; in Alberta, Edmonton; in Saskatchewan, Moose Jaw. So a whole host of communities across Canada have looked into the notion.

1530

I think the first question, then, is what is it that a Poet Laureate actually is required to do? In fact, as you go from jurisdiction to jurisdiction, there's actually quite a variation in what Poets Laureate may do. The primary role for the Canadian Poet Laureate is to encourage and promote the importance of literature, culture and language in Canadian society, but then there's a whole host of other duties about writing poetry and sponsoring poetry readings.

Toronto's Poet Laureate serves as the city's literary ambassador, as an advocate for poetry, language and the arts, and then has a number of other duties around attending events and creating a legacy project.

Edmonton—again, readings of poetry and an ambassador for the literary arts.

The PEI Poet Laureate, amongst other duties, is specifically required to promote a higher standard of literacy and to provide for the expression of culture and heritage through the literary arts.

So we see that there is a whole host of things that Poets Laureate may be required to do.

Personally, I like the notion of the Canadian rules that talk about promoting literature and culture and language through Canadian society, but I particularly like the PEI requirement for the Poet Laureate to have a role in promoting a higher standard of literacy. A whole host of people have been appointed Poets Laureate in various countries over many centuries.

I'm particularly impressed with the fact that, as one of its Poets Laureate, Toronto appointed Dennis Lee. Dennis Lee is a very illustrious person. He won the Governor General's Award for Poetry in 1972, was appointed an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1993, and an honorary doctorate from Trent University in 1995.

But, from my point of view, the most important thing he does or maybe the most well-known thing he does is as an author of children's poetry. Any of you who have ever read Alligator Pie to your children or your grandchildren: "Alligator pie, alligator pie, / If I don't get some I think I'm gonna die"—there's a bunch of moms and grandmas around here who are reciting with me. That was Toronto's Poet Laureate.

I think that's a great idea because that recognizes that, for small children, the richness of oral language, the rhythm in poetry, the exploration of words and the richness of words and their meaning and the fun of using them in a poetic or literary way is a really important thing that we can do in encouraging literacy.

One of the things that the Ontario Trillium Foundation does on behalf of the government of Ontario is actually support literacy programs around the province. Over 90 grants, for a total of \$6.7 million, have been awarded in support of projects all across the province that support literacy. In addition to that, the Ontario Trillium Foundation has awarded over 80 grants, for a total close to almost \$2.7 million for libraries in small rural communities.

I was in North Wellington at a little, teeny town called Clifford that most people only drive through on the way to somewhere else, but it had a wonderful new library. I've never seen a group of people who were so ecstatic to be able to have a local collection for their children and their youth to access books.

So I'm very enthusiastic about this motion and bringing attention to literacy and to literature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I rise in support of this motion. Ontario could really benefit from having a Poet Laureate as a leader for Ontario arts, poetry and language and as a focal point for the expression of Ontario culture and heritage. A Poet Laureate could champion the cause of literacy for our province, as has already been pointed out, by encouraging and promoting the importance of literature, culture and language, especially in these uncertain economic times for our province. In addition to the material efforts that are underway, there is a need to uplift the spirits of Ontarians. It is important to celebrate Ontario and its people, raise the profile of Ontario literary men and women and raise public awareness of the importance of poetry, prose and literature for the improvement of literacy skills.

A Poet Laureate for Ontario will also help to honour individuals who have made major contributions to the literary life of the whole province. It will add to the work already being done in the promotion of literacy and serve to assist in increasing literacy levels.

A Poet Laureate will also be a much-needed addition to the literature programs developed by the Ontario Arts Council, to the funding of writers and poets, and to the grants awarded by the Trillium Foundation to support publishing projects.

This need to further Ontario poetry and arts is linked to a wider problem regarding literature and the arts gen-

erally, and literacy skills specifically. As reported by Statistics Canada and the OECD, almost 50% of Canadians cannot work well with words and numbers, and four out of 10 adult Canadians struggle with low literacy. Literacy and the arts are important for Ontario.

In the riding of York South-Weston we are already involved in improving literacy levels for our community. In my riding, there are a variety of initiatives that focus on youth, engaging them through their love for music, popular culture, poetry and the spoken word. One of the most notable local organizations that work in this field is UrbanArts. UrbanArts organizes Culture Shock, a wonderful community festival that offers a multicultural showcase of hip-hop acts, dub poetry, spoken word artists. Every week this summer, they organized Voice Out, a community open-mike event that featured professionals in the fields of poetry and literature performing alongside local youth.

Initiatives such as these in York South-Weston have demonstrated the possibility of engaging our youth in a positive manner, keeping them off the streets and dedicated to valuable and enriching activities. In this context, a Poet Laureate would be an inspiring figure for people of all ages and would represent the true multicultural breadth of Ontario's cultural heritage—just as inspiring, for example, as Pier Giorgio Di Cicco has been for the city of Toronto during his tenure as Poet Laureate. I had the opportunity to meet him personally and had some lovely conversations with him after becoming really interested in his poetry whenever it was published in the Toronto Star. In fact, Di Cicco successfully extended the role of Poet Laureate beyond the area of arts advocacy into the realm of civic aesthetic, the building of a city by citizenship, civic ethic and urban psychology. His legacy project for the city of Toronto was appreciated and lauded everywhere.

Ontario would also benefit from her own literary ambassador who could instead have a wider scope and champion all the literary arts and wordsmiths of our great province. Other jurisdictions have already worked in this direction.

A Poet Laureate for Ontario would only be part of a larger strategy to promote poetry, the arts and culture, but it would be an essential part of this strategy. When the efforts of a Poet Laureate, whose credibility and professionalism are renowned and respected, are coupled with the efforts by government to improve literacy levels with programs and services, great results can be achieved.

The promotion of poetry, arts and culture in Ontario is an absolute necessity, and for these reasons, for the noble cause brought forth by my fellow member from York Centre, it could be valuable to remind ourselves of a glimpse of poetic wisdom voiced by none other than Edgar Allan Poe quite some time ago: "Poetry elevates the soul. Poetry is the rhythmical creation of beauty.... and beauty is the province of poetry." There is much beauty in Ontario, and it's just waiting for us to celebrate it duly.

1540

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Kwinter, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Monte Kwinter: Poets' Corner is the name traditionally given to a section of the south transept of Westminster Abbey due to the number of poets, playwrights and writers now buried and commemorated there. The first person to be interred there was Geoffrey Chaucer. The erection of a magnificent tomb by Nicholas Brigham to Chaucer in the middle of the 16th century and the nearby burial of Edmund Spenser in 1599 started a tradition that is still upheld.

To the member from Toronto–Danforth, the plight of the artist is not something that is new and not all poets appreciated memorialization. Samuel Wesley's epitaph for Samuel Butler, who supposedly died in poverty, continued Butler's satiric tone.

I feel that a debate on a Poet Laureate cannot go without having a poem. This is the epitaph that was given to Butler:

While Butler, needy wretch, was yet alive,
No generous patron would a dinner give;
See him, when starv'd to death, and turn'd to dust,
Presented with a monumental bust.
The poet's fate is here in emblem shown,
He ask'd for bread, and he received a stone.

I want to thank the members who participated in the debate: the member for Kitchener–Waterloo, the member for Toronto–Danforth, the member for Guelph and the member for York South–Weston. Hopefully we can go forward with this and establish the position of Poet Laureate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE MOIS DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

Mr. Balkissoon moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month / Projet de loi 207, Loi visant à désigner le mois de février de chaque année comme Mois de l'histoire des Noirs.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'm extremely pleased to rise and speak on Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month.

First of all, I would like to recognize Rosemary Sadlier, president, and Sally Houston, treasurer, of the Ontario Black History Society, joining us here today in the west gallery for this debate on Bill 207.

As everyone knows, I represent Scarborough–Rouge River, a riding with a very diverse population. Many of my residents are of African descent, from the continent and other parts of the world, especially the Caribbean

islands. I've been motivated to bring this bill forward by the many young people in my riding of African heritage who need to know those of their race who came before them and who have made a contribution to our great province and country. Also, a few years ago, sadly, a motion was put forward by a member of a school board in Ontario to get rid of Black History Month celebrations in their schools.

Black History Month is exactly what the young people in my riding and the province need. It provides them with hope, with inspiration, and it is an opportunity for them to remember and to appreciate the struggles and the achievements of the black Canadian community, an important part of our history.

As you also know, my constituency was formerly represented by the Honourable Alvin Curling, the first African-Canadian appointed Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, who has been a long-time political colleague and a strong supporter of mine.

The Honourable Lincoln Alexander served Ontario as the first African-Canadian Lieutenant Governor. I've had the opportunity to serve with His Honour on a city of Toronto Caribana review committee. I have the utmost respect and admiration for this distinguished Ontarian.

Black History Month can be traced back to 1926, which was started as Negro History Week, by Carter G. Woodson, a Harvard-educated black historian. His goal was to raise awareness and understanding by incorporating the African experience in the school curriculum. He would be happy to know that today there are schools in Ontario that recognize and celebrate Black History Month in February as part of the school's program.

Black History Month was officially recognized in Canada in the early 1950s, when the Canadian Negro Women's Association petitioned Toronto city council, and in 1979, in part due to the lobbying of the newly formed Ontario Black History Society, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to proclaim Black History Month. National recognition became official on December 14, 1995, after Dr. Jean Augustine, currently appointed Ontario's Fairness Commissioner, requested and received unanimous consent to recognize February as Black History Month. She was also the first African-Canadian woman elected to the Parliament of Canada and then became the first African-Canadian federal cabinet minister.

Despite a presence dating back as early as 1603, when the first-known black man in Canada, Mathieu Da Costa, who acted as a translator between the Mi'kmaq and the French, arrived with Samuel de Champlain, people of African descent are often not part of Canadian history books. Very little is mentioned of the fact that slavery once existed in what is now Canada; or that many Loyalists who came here after the American Revolution and settled in the Maritimes were blacks; or the many sacrifices made by black Canadian soldiers during wars as far back as the war of 1812.

Black history refers to the stories, experiences and accomplishments of people of African origin. Here are some of their stories and some important firsts:

In 1628, Olivier Le Jeune, a seven-year-old native of Madagascar, was the first-known black slave to have lived in Canada.

In 1793, the Upper Canada Abolition Act, supported by Lieutenant Governor Simcoe, was enacted, making it illegal to bring slaves into Upper Canada, which made Canada the first jurisdiction in the British Empire to move towards the abolition of slavery.

Approximately 20,000 blacks found their way into Canada from 1800 to 1865 via the Underground Railroad, with the help of Harriet Tubman. She became known as the Moses of her people and the conductor who led hundreds of slaves to freedom. Despite great personal risk, when the United States fugitive law was passed, she guided fugitive slaves further north. Later she became a leader in the abolitionist movement. During the Civil War she worked as a nurse and served as a spy for the Union forces in South Carolina.

In 1853, Mary Ann Shadd was acknowledged as the first black newspaperwoman and first woman publisher of a newspaper in Canada.

In 1857, William Hall was the first Canadian sailor of African descent to receive the Victoria Cross for bravery and distinguished service.

In 1894, William Peyton Hubbard, council member, was elected to Toronto city council and served for 13 successive terms. He served on the board of control and was also the acting mayor.

In 1951, Reverend Addie Aylestock was the first black woman ordained as a minister in Canada.

I could go on and on with many stories of the black community, showing that they have made a significant contribution to our province and to our country, but in respect of my speaking time, I cannot provide all of those to you. But it is well known, what this community has made as a contribution to this country.

More than half a million people identified themselves as black in the 2006 census. Approximately 60,000 live here in Ontario, yet we have not formally recognized February as Black History Month. Although Black History Month is officially recognized in Canada and in the city of Toronto, it is not widely understood that it's not official in the province of Ontario.

As 2009 marks the 30th anniversary of the proclamation by the city of Toronto, an impressive milestone that has encouraged events and activities that celebrate Black History Month today, I hope that this bill finally becomes law in Ontario. I introduced it once before, in 2007, but unfortunately my luck wasn't that great and the House was prorogued for an election.

1550

I think it is essential that we do this to recognize the accomplishments of the African-Canadian community, and it is my hope that this bill provides inspiration to all residents in Ontario, especially our people of African heritage, to be proud, and to understand and appreciate the events of the past.

I want to leave the House with one final message that I have taken from Rosemary Sadlier, president of the

Ontario Black History Society. She wrote that "with roots dating back to 1603, African Canadians have defended, cleared, built and farmed this country. Our presence is well established but not well known." She goes on to say, "When the contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged, when the achievements of black people are known, when black people are routinely included and affirmed through our curriculum, our books and the media, and treated with equality, then there will no longer be a need for a Black History Month."

Many of us hope this will occur during our lifetime. I truly hope that the members of this House will support this particular bill again, and I really hope the government will enact this piece of legislation and finally recognize the contribution of a significant part of Ontario and Canadian society.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The member from Kitchener-Waterloo.

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I am very pleased to speak today, on behalf of our critic, Ted Arnott, as well, regarding Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History Month, introduced by Mr. Balkissoon. If this is going to be passed, which I hope it is this time, because it's the second introduction by Mr. Balkissoon, then we would of course have Black History Month each year in February.

We know that this bill is intended to highlight a very important part of Ontario's history; that is, the contributions of Canadians of African descent. I am very proud to say that in my community of Kitchener-Waterloo, we have many Canadians of African descent, and they play a very, very important part in the life of my community in the region of Waterloo.

We have this bill before us, and as I say, Mr. Balkissoon did introduce a similar bill, Bill 182, in March 2007. That bill was carried at second reading. It was referred to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, and obviously it was never proclaimed by the government. Hopefully this one will get to the point where there is proclamation.

During the second reading debate that took place on the previous bill, two of my colleagues, Mr. Wilson and Frank Klees, spoke in favour of the bill, and did so on behalf of the entire PC caucus. I would say to you that today I stand here one more time on behalf of our caucus and again indicate our strong support for this bill.

Mr. Klees, at the time he spoke, noted that the Ontario government recognized Black History Month in 1993. He recognized the bill as symbolic, but he also argued that we should go beyond acknowledgment and recognition.

More recently, a bill was passed in this House—Bill 111, An Act to proclaim Emancipation Day—on December 4, 2008. This bill was initiated by Mr. Arnott, and he approached Maria Van Bommel to be the co-sponsor. When this bill was introduced, I just want to highlight the fact that this was the very first bill to be co-sponsored by MPPs from different parties. Mr. Arnott's bill to proclaim Emancipation Day, on December 4, 2008, proclaimed August 1 of each year as Emancipation

Day, in recognition of the abolition of slavery in the British empire. I am very pleased to say that Mr. Arnott had the support of Dr. Rosemary Sadlier, the president of the Ontario Black History Society. I'm very pleased that you're here today because I know he did appreciate the support that you did give him on Bill 111.

I think it's important to note that the Ontario Black History Society is a not-for-profit, registered Canadian charity. They are dedicated to the study, the preservation and the promotion of black history and heritage. I believe that whenever we are discussing legislation as we are doing today, it's very important that they be contacted and asked for their advice and also their support, and so I'm very pleased that at the last minute they were contacted and are able to be here today.

I think they thought, as many other people thought, that Black History Month had already been established. We need to remember that this is an issue that not just has provincial relevance but it also has national relevance. That's why, in December 1995, the Parliament of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month, and that was following a motion that was introduced by the first black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine, the MP for Etobicoke-Lakeshore, who at that time was the parliamentary secretary to the Prime Minister. I'm very pleased to say that in December 1995 that motion was carried unanimously by the House of Commons. I have no doubt that the motion before us today will also be carried unanimously by all members, and I simply hope that this time we can move forward and see proclamation.

As I say, some of my colleagues have spoken before on this bill, and they did support it. I think that's very, very important. In fact, I would go back to February 5, 1997, when the Ontario Legislature gave unanimous consent to recognize February as Black History Month. Marilyn Mushinski, who also was from the Scarborough community and was Minister of Citizenship, Culture and Recreation, said at that time, "I am pleased to see that Black History Month has grown so much since its inception in 1926. Carter G. Woodson's dreams are kept alive by this growing annual tradition as more and more people become involved in the month-long celebrations here in Ontario and across North America."

So I think you can understand why some people already think we have Black History Month, because it appears that MPPs of all political parties and stripes have been very, very supportive and have recognized the need to keep the history of the black community alive and to make sure that we celebrate their many contributions to the life of this province.

I just want you to know that I support this bill, and we hope that it will pass through, that there will be proclamation and we will continue each February to be able to recognize and celebrate Black History Month. I know that in my own community of Kitchener-Waterloo there is a celebration. There is much that happens in order to ensure that we remember their contribution and that we do observe it. I hope all members will certainly support this.

1600

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I too am happy to speak to Bill 207, an Act to name February in each year Black History Month. I do so acknowledging the member from Scarborough-Rouge River and accepting all of the remarks that have been made by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River. I have no doubt that this bill will pass, and it's a good thing that it pass.

I know there's a debate—we haven't talked about that debate but there is one—in the black community in particular. One famous example: The renowned actor Morgan Freeman, in an interview with 60 Minutes' Mike Wallace, stated that in his view Black History Month wasn't necessary and black history is American history and there's no need to dedicate a special month to it. He and many others, I am sure, say that and/or many different things in this debate.

We know that it exists and we know that people like Rosemary Sadlier—who was obviously acknowledged earlier by the member from Scarborough-Rouge River and quoted the member in the article that she wrote where she says, "When the contributions of people of African descent are acknowledged, when the achievements of black people are known, when black people are routinely included or affirmed through our curriculum, our books and the media, and treated with equality, then there will no longer be a need for Black History Month." It is that kind of debate: people who think we should move or transcend this need to recognize Black History Month and those who say we need to have it and only when they get the equality that they deserve can we then abolish this Black History Month. I happen to be one who supports people like Rosemary Sadlier and would want to say that rather than focusing on the contributions, which are many—and the member from Scarborough-Rouge River mentioned them and mentioned members of the black community who have a big profile in the community—those and those who do not have the same profile are indeed making a contribution and have made it for hundreds of years in this province.

So rather than talking about and naming individuals who are famous or not so famous, I would rather speak a little bit to where Rosemary Sadlier ended in her article and where the member from Scarborough-Rouge River ended, because what the member says in his bill—and he talks about it in the first sentence: "The history of Canadians of African descent and their struggle against slavery, racism, exclusion and inequality is a significant part of Ontario's history." It is not only a part of the history, it continues today, and that's really the debate we need to have. I know we want to talk about the contributions of black Canadians, and we should, but we need to make it part of the other history, the one where black Canadians face discrimination, racism, exclusion and inequality.

In my view that is the debate, because until we deal with and solve some of those questions, all the other stuff

is nice but it doesn't really deal with the fundamental problems that those who are black are dealing with on a regular basis. Until we acknowledge as white Canadians that we have racist tendencies, we're never going to be able to deal with those questions. It's hard. It's hard particularly for politicians, because nobody dares ever admit, in part or in whole, that we could be racist. We'd never want to say that. In fact, those words never come out of any politician's mouth. But we should be talking about it, because we do have tendencies. They're there, and we need to deal with them.

I have to tell you that I have my own personal history with this issue as a former school trustee with the Toronto board, where we celebrated Black History Month but we also had something that I am proud of, as a school trustee, and proud to have been a part of there having been a vote to have made it happen, which is the ability to teach international languages at the Toronto board, then called heritage languages and now called international languages, and, concurrently, to be able to provide black cultural heritage programs.

It's a proud history of the Toronto board. It's a history that we're slowly losing. The Toronto board is losing those programs because the funding isn't there. The Toronto board no longer has the money, so you don't have principals supporting the programs. If they exist, it's not because the board is promoting them; it's because, where they exist, the community is supporting them, and where they do exist, you probably have some principals actively making it happen. But they're slowly dying—the international languages program, that is. I believe that unless we commit ourselves, as a board and locally and as a province, to continue with those programs, they will eventually die off because the funding won't be there.

I, as a school trustee, when I had my time there for eight long full-time years because I quit as a teacher to do that on a full-time basis, earning \$7,000 at the time when I got elected in 1982—

Interjection: With no pension.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —with no pension—I remember dealing with issues of streaming in the educational system. I remember my former colleagues—I shouldn't say "former"; I was a teacher. I remember my colleagues not being happy with me attacking the notion of streaming. I remember principals in my riding inviting me to a lecture about my views on streaming and why it was that I should be talking about how the system possibly discriminates and sorts kids out and streams them in a way that children of colour in particular and other linguistic communities end up in reading groups that are not at the high level but end up at the lower levels, and when you get into the high school system, certain folks, students of colour in particular—Italian Canadians in the 1960s, Portuguese Canadians in the 1970s and 1980s and now the Spanish-speaking community in general—end up being streamed in vocational schools.

You say, "How could that be? It can't be deliberate." I had all of the principals attacking me on my views about

why it is that it's happening and what we could do as a system to solve that. We stream kids, and then we say, "There's nothing we can do. It's cultural." Why is it that some communities do well? And if some communities do well, then others who do not must be cultural. I argued that we, as a system, have a lot to do to reshape that streaming process, that we could help and we could deal with social issues and economic issues that affect them, that force them into certain categories. Boy, was I attacked by the principals.

We know racial profiling exists. We know that. There are some who deny it, but we know it exists. I remember Zanana Akande, who was a member of provincial Parliament with me in 1990 as a New Democrat. She talked about her experience of her son going home on an evening on Spadina and Eglinton. He was going home and some police cruiser stopped by and actually arrested the young man because they obviously believed and thought that no black family could be living in that community. It's racial profiling. It's but one little example. There are so many. It exists.

We know that because of streaming, because of the concerns that black men and women have had over the years and why it is that so many black students end up dropping out early and not succeeding, that they wanted a chance to have a pilot project where African Canadian kids—black kids—could go and test it out, test out how it is that a school where only black kids could go—and others could go as well—but given the choice, where black kids could be in a school, focusing on black history, focusing on how we can make it possible for those kids to succeed.

1610

We had resistance from the Toronto board, but eventually, they allowed it. We had resistance from the Premier. He said no; he doesn't support it. Rather than acknowledging, validating the concerns of black parents that they're not succeeding in the regular system, that we needed an alternative school that could give them a chance to succeed, to focus on themselves as black Canadians, there was strong resistance. We now know that not only have they met the enrolments, but they've gone beyond them. They need to find a different way to deal with the fact that there are more and more students who want to get into the school.

We have to deal with issues of discrimination and racism. We know that there are many people in the black community who have good academic credentials, yet they are the first fired and last hired. It's wrong. They earn less than white Canadians. It's wrong. Why is it that we tolerate that?

As I speak to my friend from Scarborough—Rouge River and I support his motion, we need to deal with all of the issues that are profound and systemic. Unless we deal with them and only focus on celebrating Black History Month, we're not doing justice to the black community, we're not dealing with issues of inequality and we're not dealing with issues of racism.

Yes, let's recognize the accomplishments of African Canadians by celebrating each year Black History

Month, now to be recognized, once we pass it, by the province; let's celebrate the contributions, but let's deal with the real problems that many black Ontarians still face. Until we deal with them, they will not be genuine in quality, as they should be.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to commend the member from Trinity-Spadina for his reminder to all of us of our responsibilities and certainly of our shortcomings. We have a long way to go yet.

I actually am very pleased to be standing here again today. It has been almost a year since I was invited by the member from Wellington-Halton Hills to co-sponsor Bill 111, the act to declare Emancipation Day. It's certainly a great pleasure to stand here again to speak in support of Bill 207.

Black history is a story of individual sacrifice, courage and heroism. That history is available to be taken in many museums and interpretive centres across the province of Ontario. A number of them exist in my own riding. I have the honour and the privilege of having many parts of the Underground Railroad come through my riding. Some of these museums and interpretive centres are in places like Buxton; they're in Lucan; and they're in Dresden. Anyone who wants to go there and take the time will hear and experience the dangers and the hardships that were endured by the slaves as they tried to escape from the oppression of slavery.

In Lucan, you'll find the remnants of a black community called Wilberforce. Wilberforce no longer exists there, but it's named after William Wilberforce, who is known as a liberator. As a tribute to that history, the new elementary school in Lucan is now named Wilberforce. To many in the community, it's a reminder of their part in black history.

If you go into the southern part of my riding, at the bend in the Sydenham River you will come to a community just outside of Dresden called Uncle Tom's Cabin. That is the early settlement, the Dawn settlement, of slaves as they tried to escape through the Underground Railroad. Uncle Tom's Cabin was actually the home of Reverend Josiah Henson and his wife Nancy. They lived there and started the school, started educating people as they came through, but they were an integral part of the Underground Railroad. The Underground Railroad had conductors on it; it had brakemen on it. These people were a means of helping slaves to move from the States, in particular the southern states, and into Canada because Canada had already been emancipated. So it was very important for them to do this.

I'm very proud of these in my community. I know that the history certainly is reflected there, and I feel that to have February declared as Black History Month would just further enhance what has already been done in the community in terms of preserving that history. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I'm very pleased to rise to support Bill 207 and to support the notion of official designation of February in Ontario as Black History Month. I want to just pick up on what other folks have said, how important it is that we create opportunities—and I feel in my role as Minister of Education that it's extremely important that we create opportunities for people to hear their stories, tell their stories, and particularly for children to hear the stories of their families. I think in our schools, this is an extremely important aspect of what happens during Black History Month.

I want to pick up on something that the member for Trinity-Spadina said, and that is that there is more to be done and there are other, more systemic things that we also need to do beyond what happens in Black History Month. I just wanted to point out that we recently, this year, introduced our equity and inclusive education strategy. What that does is it supports and expects that school boards will have an equity strategy and an inclusive education strategy in place, and that they will work on creating better resources and making sure that all children, no matter what their background, no matter what their creed, no matter what their cultural makeup is, will feel included and will be part of the classroom and part of the school.

That strategy that is in place now in Ontario schools and is being developed picks up on work that actually was done by the NDP when they were in office. It's extremely important work, and it builds on all of the work that people like Rosemary Sadlier have done and reinforces it in our schools. Our children need to feel safe and they need to hear their stories.

I want to just say, too, that I believe that Black History Month is a concentrated opportunity to look at Canadian stories. I don't know if people have had a chance to read Lawrence Hill's *The Book of Negroes* or Mary Tilberg's *Oonagh*, but those are stories about Ontario and Canada. They are stories about African-Canadians and how their stories connect with people of African descent from other countries—the United States, Britain, the black diaspora.

It's extremely important to me as the Minister of Education that we have Black History Month designated. It's extremely important to the diversity of this province that we support this notion, and I know that the member for Scarborough-Rouge River has done a good thing in bringing this forward.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I rise in support of Bill 207. I'm delighted that the member from Scarborough-Rouge River is bringing forward this bill again for the second time and I know that it will, no doubt, receive unanimous support from all the parties.

My black history includes a number of persons that you and I know personally, and others as well. But it includes William Hubbard—let's start in 1893—the first black politician in Toronto, who was elected and re-elected 13 consecutive times. The number of residents who could trace their ancestry to Africa in those days, in 1860, was 1,400 in the city of Toronto. So we've made a

great deal of progress when we look at the numbers we have today, and we are proud of all those who make a contribution to our culture, our history and our life here in Toronto.

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My black history includes Daniel Hill, the former Ombudsman of Ontario and the first director of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. My black history includes Rosemary Sadlier, who, of course, was mentioned a number of times here today and who is president of the Ontario Black History Society and a member of the Ontario Heritage Alliance. I'd like to thank her personally today and recognize her for making a tremendous contribution to a book called Toronto's Many Faces, from which I happen to read right now. So thank you very much, Rosemary, for making your contribution to the book.

My black history includes Jean Augustine, the first minister of African Canadian heritage in the government of Canada. And certainly, my black history includes our friend and the first black Speaker of the Ontario Legislature, Dr. Alvin Curling, who has made, of course, a tremendous contribution to life here in Toronto and has affected our lives directly and indirectly for many years.

What all of these people, all of these heroes, have in common is not only a heritage but also they have a belief, a belief that there can be equality of law, of treatment and of education that so many of you spoke about. This kind of equality and treatment of respect should be reflected in our figures of authority. So the biggest contribution we can make today is to try to ensure that our children in our schools see themselves reflected in figures of authority. That is so important. Why? Because we have some indicators of what happens when a child becomes successful, when a child later on in life begins to bloom and make a contribution and takes the right steps in their life. We know that. We know what happens.

You can find those details in a book called Psycho-Cybernetics by a German named Dr. Maltz. I think it was Dr. Maltz who wrote the book. He says in the book that the principal indicator of a child's success in the future is that he or she must have a sense of self-worth. The way the children get a sense of self-worth is to see reflected—in the curriculum of the school, in the figures of authority and within their own lives on a daily basis—their culture, their dreams and their traditions.

It is really of utmost importance that we make this contribution. In fact, I would hope that this bill is going to be unanimously accepted today. I hope that when we pass this bill that we make a tremendous contribution to these children, because they are our future.

So while we are supporting this bill today, we must realize that our children have to have a good start and the start they will have in life depends on what we leave them. What you and I have done today by supporting this bill is a tremendous step in the right direction, in the direction to ensure that these children will take the right steps and that these children will receive some idea that we care for them, that we believe that we're all in this together, that we believe that we and the children are one

family. And as a family, of course, we have a tremendous interest in these children because they belong to us.

So I say to Ms. Sadlier, who is here today, and I say to all Ontarians, we have a duty to perform, and that duty is to ensure that our system is open and that our system is a system of justice and fairness. That, today, is what we are doing when we support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Balkissoon, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I just want to say thank you to the member from Kitchener-Waterloo, the member from Trinity-Spadina, the member from Lambton-Kent-Middlesex, the Minister of Education—the member from Don Valley West—and the member from Davenport for their kind words on this particular bill, especially the encouragement that they all have given.

As I stated before, it was very sad to know that just a couple of years ago, a school trustee in one of our prominent school boards wanted to get rid of Black History Month celebrations. That was very depressing.

Along with that, many of you may know it was only eight short years ago that I served as a member of the Toronto Police Services Board, and I can tell you when I was on that board, I raised the issue of equity, discrimination and many times demanded that sensitivity training be given to our police officers. It was sad to note recently that the chief of police for Toronto actually commented that racial profiling still exists.

I brought this bill, again, to encourage the young people in my riding and to support them. As I stated before, it was only in 1793, just over 200 years ago, that Lieutenant Governor Simcoe gave us the motivation to abolish slavery—200 years ago. I still think we have to do everything we can to bring the issue to the forefront to really accomplish what Ms. Sadlier has said in her remarks, that when we remove all of this in our society and our black African-Canadian community truly has equity with all of us in this province, it's then we have achieved what we started out to do. As leaders of our communities, we need to do what's best for the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 37, standing in the name of Mr. Bailey.

Mr. Bailey has moved private member's notice of motion 113. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

ONTARIO POET LAUREATE

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now deal with the next ballot item, number 38.

Mr. Kwinter has moved private member's notice of motion 114. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE MOIS
DE L'HISTOIRE DES NOIRS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 39.

Mr. Balkissoon has moved second reading of Bill 207, An Act to name February in each year Black History

Month. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare the motion carried.

Second reading agreed to.

Mr. Bas Balkissoon: I'd like the bill to be sent to the Standing Committee on Social Policy.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be referred to the Standing Committee on Social Policy? Agreed. So ordered.

Orders of the day.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1628.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

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Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Brotten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
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First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
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Monday 26 October 2009

Lundi 26 octobre 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
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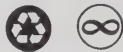
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 26 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 26 octobre 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of personal reflection and thought.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my delight to have in the members' gallery Paul Pighin, the former candidate in London West and now a staffer in my constituency office; Bhutla Karpoche, also a staffer in my constituency office; and Susan Rogers, also a worker in my constituency office. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to welcome, in the members' east gallery, a member of my constituency, Mr. Roman Andrzejewski, accompanied by my legislative assistant, Jessica MacInnis.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: Good morning. I would like to welcome to the Legislature today the students from William Tredway Junior Public School in the riding of Scarborough-Guildwood. They are not in the Legislature yet, but they are in the hallway making their way up.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je voudrais présenter aujourd'hui M. Philippe Boissonneault, qui est le président du conseil d'administration du Collège Boréal.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome my friends Gary and Mary Margaret Koreen from the great city of London.

Hon. John Milloy: I want to give a blanket welcome to all the presidents of Ontario's community colleges who are visiting Queen's Park here today. As we've heard, some of them are in the gallery and others will be joining us and be here throughout the day, including a reception this evening. We certainly want to welcome them here to Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member for Scarborough-Rouge River and page Nithya Nithiaraj, we welcome her mother, Christina, to the Legislature today. On behalf of the member from York West and page Rushabh Shah, we would like to welcome his mother, Reshma, and his father, Kamal, to the east members' gallery today. Welcome to the pages' families.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would just like to correct my record from Thursday's question period. During question period, in

response to a comment from the Premier, I said that for every \$1 that the HST costs consumers, 12 cents would be returned in income tax. I was in error and, in fact, it's 18 cents.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Deputy Premier. Deputy Premier, within hours of revealing your record \$24.7-billion deficit, the Dominion Bond Rating Service immediately rendered its verdict, downgrading Ontario's credit rating. Moody's and Standard and Poor's are sure to follow.

To the minister: How much more will taxpayers be forced to pay in borrowing costs because of this very sobering downgrade?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite is, in fact, correct that DBRS did lower it a notch, while not lowering it a grade. It's something that, frankly, we had anticipated. I would remind the member opposite that the last time Ontario got a credit upgrade was under the Dalton McGuinty Liberal government in 2004.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the finance minister: Before Ontario's credit rating dropped under Dalton McGuinty, the Premier was already spending \$9.4 billion on serving the debt. That's more than the McGuinty Liberals spend on the entire colleges and universities system. It's more than they spend on the entire justice system.

Shockingly, with the worst deficit in Canada, the Premier's response on his plan to get us out of his mess was that he's going to stand there and he's going to do some heavy thinking. Well, Minister, it's been a year since the economic crisis began. Ontario families expect a Premier who will lead in a crisis, not freeze.

Is Canada's worst government so paralyzed by scandal that they're incapable of acting on this record deficit?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Actually, this government led. It led in its March budget that is investing in stimulus, investing in job creation. It's investing to a manner and extent that was called upon by the International Monetary Fund, called upon by the OECD. It's being done by the government of Canada, the government of British Columbia, the government of Alberta, the government of Sas-

katchewan, the government of Manitoba, governments around the world. That was the appropriate response for this year and we will continue to implement that.

Going forward, governments around the world will have to grapple with deficits and we intend to do that. We will be responsible and focused. We will spend the next five months leading up to the next provincial budget consulting and working toward getting that down. That is the appropriate process, and when Ontario gets through this, and we will, we will be bigger, we will be better and we will be stronger.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: While the Premier spent the weekend and this morning in his thinking place, Ontario families are now reeling with the news that we have the worst deficit in Canada. Furthermore, the McGuinty government is spending a colossal \$2.8 million more each and every hour than they're taking in in provincial revenue.

Not only did the Premier fail to bring a single item for restraint after that bombshell on Thursday, on the same day he revealed this record deficit the Premier said he'd bring in full-day kindergarten, a massive new spending program.

When Ontario families see their bank account is empty, when they find their credit cards are maxed out, they don't go shopping for a brand new car.

Has the Premier given up on any kind of restraint simply because this guy is hard-wired—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: This government and this Premier are taking appropriate steps in the worst downturn since the Great Depression to stimulate the Ontario economy. We're following the advice of the International Monetary Fund, of the OECD. We're doing what the government of Canada is doing. We're doing what the government of British Columbia and what governments around the world are doing.

We believe that investing \$32.5 billion in infrastructure is the appropriate response, even if it means a deficit this year and into the near-term future. Those are choices that governments around the world have made. It's about keeping the economy growing as much as we can in the context of a very difficult international circumstance. It's the right policy, and that leader and his party ought to tell the people of Ontario what they'll cut. Will it be hospitals? Will it be schools? Will it be water—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1040

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Deputy Premier concerning his billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. Last Thursday, when asked about the auditor's comments at committee, your Premier dodged, deflected and stone-

walled all the opposition questions. I'll give you a chance to do better.

Deputy Premier, why has the Premier been suggesting that the auditor did not find party politics were a factor in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle, when the auditor says that he did not even investigate this?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think the honourable well knows that the Premier has offered a quotation from the auditor himself on this very matter. But I do want to counter the characterizations that the honourable member offered in his very question.

First and foremost is his lack of willingness to acknowledge that while the auditor has pointed out areas where expenditures must be better controlled, he was also very clear in acknowledging that substantial pieces of the infrastructure necessary to implement an electronic health record have been created, and those expenditures which he continues to devalue—there has been clear evidence pointed out by the auditor of the investments that have been made in the underlying infrastructure toward the necessary implementation of an electronic health record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We found out at committee and by reading page 6 of the auditor's report that he did not have any mandate whatsoever to investigate the political ties between the Dalton McGuinty government and their Liberal friends.

The Premier, week after week, has selectively quoted from the auditor's report, but from the auditor himself we found out that they "didn't conduct a specific investigation" and "didn't do any research into who could be politically tied" to the grants.

This is a very different story than what the Premier has been telling us, rather artistically, in the Legislature. There is no doubt that the Premier's assertions have now been proven incorrect. Deputy Premier, was that intentional?

Hon. George Smitherman: The honourable member, as has become the norm, seeks to impugn motive. First and foremost are his continuing references to the idea that there has been—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment, please.

Hon. George Smitherman: I withdraw.

The honourable member continues in his presentations in this House to characterize the \$1 billion spent as not having achieved any objective towards the implementation of an electronic health record. This is not factually correct. As the auditor's report has indicated, substantial progress has been made.

Further, this is a quote directly from the standing committee that the honourable member himself referenced: "I wouldn't want to say that our work would have been comprehensive enough to allow someone to conclude that on all of these contracts, without a doubt, we're concluding that there definitely weren't political ties. All we're saying is, we kept our eyes open; we didn't see any evidence of it."

This is a quote directly referenced from the very committee meeting that the honourable member was speaking of.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member from Renfrew to moderate his interjections, please.

Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Ontario families know what you achieved in your billion-dollar boondoggle: Liberal-friendly consultants got fat and rich, and Ontario families got absolutely nothing in return.

The Premier tried to suggest that the Auditor General investigated the ties—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'd just ask the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs to withdraw that last comment he just made.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Continue.

Mr. Tim Hudak: The Premier has tried to suggest that the auditor investigated ties between you, yourself, Minister Smitherman, and the McGuinty Liberals, and the Liberal-friendly consultants; the auditor, this past week, confirmed that he did no such thing.

There's no denying that at least Karli Farrow, your former senior political aide—and to the Premier—got rich from the untendered contracts, as did your friend John Ronson, the Ontario Liberal campaign chair.

I ask, are the McGuinty Liberals playing games with the auditor's quotes and refusing to call a public inquiry because they know other Liberal friends benefited too?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I do remind members on all sides of the standing orders about impugning motive. I have allowed some things to go through, but I would just ask members to be cautious of impugning that motive against decisions that have been made.

Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: In the honourable member's lead-in to his question, he talked about what Ontario families achieved. Ontario families achieved a wait-time information system so that all Ontarians have access to timely surgical procedures. We connected 7,000 secure network sites, connected over 500 telemedicine sites and helped to build and maintain two highly secure data centres, the master patient index, the Ontario lab information system, the Ontario MD portal, the drug profile viewer, all the systems that support the Ontario telemedicine network and systems used by the community care access centres across the province of Ontario. These are all evidence of the infrastructure investments necessary to support the implementation of an electronic health record, and they all stand in contrast to the ongoing characterizations of that member to the people of Ontario telling them they got no value for their money, when the clear evidence in all of these areas is that people bought necessary elements of the infrastructure to support the implementation of an electronic health record.

ONTARIO DRUG BENEFIT PROGRAM

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. The McGuinty government has a two-tiered solution to Ontario's fiscal woes: Ontario families get whacked with an unfair sales tax and are forced to live with cuts to health care, while well-connected insiders get corporate tax giveaways and lucrative contracts.

On Friday, we learned that McKinsey and Co. was paid \$750,000 to propose cuts to seniors' drug benefits. Will the minister come clean and release the contract details and McKinsey's recommendations today?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be very, very clear about this: We are absolutely not looking at reducing drug benefits for seniors or for people on social assistance. Let me repeat that: We are not considering any reductions to drug benefits for seniors or people on social assistance. In fact, we're doing exactly the opposite. We are expanding the number of drugs that are available to people through the Ontario drug benefit program. We have made great progress in increasing access to drugs. We're getting better value for money for taxpayers. But there is more work to do. Compared to other jurisdictions, Ontario is paying far too much for generic drugs. As I say, we have begun to get some savings, which we have completely reinvested in new drugs, but there is more work to do.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, this deal was so secret that the government staff denied the sole-source contract even existed. Seniors and their families are told they need to pay higher taxes and accept cuts to health care, but this government refuses to tell them what it spends their money on.

Ontarians deserve full disclosure on what McKinsey charged in per diems and fees and what they recommended. Why won't the minister release the details of this secret sole-source contract right now?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This "secret" contract actually formed the basis of a presentation that is on the Ministry of Health website. I would urge the leader of the third party to check out a discussion document that has been presented to our industry partners in July 2009. We are working with the drug industry, we're working with pharmacists, and we're working with consumers, all interested parties, to continue to increase the number of drugs that are offered to Ontarians. But we need to drive down the price that Ontario taxpayers pay for these drugs through using our greater purchasing power and providing accountability and transparency to our drug system.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Seniors and their families are willing to make sacrifices during tough times; there's no doubt about it. But they expect their government to be balanced, transparent and fair. Instead, this government cuts secret deals with consultants, refuses to share the

details, and tells seniors to expect drug benefit cuts while corporate tax giveaways and consultants' contracts are handed out like candy on Halloween.

If the minister has nothing to hide, why won't she release all of the details of this secret contract and show Ontarians what they got for their money?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me repeat: We are absolutely not considering any cuts to drug benefits for seniors or for people on social assistance. We are doing exactly the opposite. We introduced Bill 102 so that we could leverage our drug program to get better value for money. We've saved \$700 million through that, all of which and more we have invested in more drugs, better drugs. We've added 682 new individual products to the formulary since 2006. We've increased funding for cancer drugs from \$72 million to \$195 million. We are investing more and more in drugs for people. We will continue to do that, but we must make sure we're getting the best value for the money.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is back to the Minister of Health. In communities across Ontario, emergency rooms are closing and health services are disappearing, with tragic consequences. If, as this government claims and this minister claims, there are no health care cuts planned, why are local health integration networks projecting a decrease in hospital operating funds?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, we will continue to do what we've done in the past. We will continue to invest more in hospitals and in the health sector overall. I think that the member opposite is referring to a planning document that was shared with the LHINs. It's very important for you to understand what this document is. This is not a budget document. This is not a document that tells—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member from Hamilton East that if he chooses to offer some interjections through the question period, it best be done from his seat.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I say, the document you are referring to is not a budget document; it is a planning document that is incomplete and out of date. It does not include increases to the base funding, which we have provided every single year we have been in office and will be providing again next year. It does not include any of the funding that we've given to hospitals on our wait-times strategy. Hospital funding will be higher next year; I can assure you of that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister knows that the document did, in fact, show up online and then it mysteriously vanished not too long afterwards. The minister was asked for details but she refused to speak to the

details. She cancelled the interviews that were supposed to be held on this very issue.

This is a government claiming it can cut corporate taxes and pay consultants millions of dollars every day without cutting health care, but it keeps getting caught in the act of cutting. If they aren't cutting health care services, I'd like to know why local hospitals keep closing, why people can't get OHIP-listed services and why the public is kept in the dark.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me just speak to that. Health care is a key priority for this government, there is no question, and we have shown that year after year through our budget process. We know that we are facing difficult economic challenges, but our commitment to health care remains. We are very focused on enhancing the sustainability of the health care system because we need this health care system not just for our generation but for generations to come. So we are committed to increasing funding for hospitals. We are looking at any way we have to improve the sustainability of our system. Future generations are counting on us to do this job and do it well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Well, there's one thing I would agree with: The people of this province do need their health care system. Christine Wines from Grimsby lives in pain because her hospital cannot afford an OHIP-listed surgery. She needs her health care system. Bob Haynes from Port Colborne had to watch as his mother suffered a severe stroke because her local emergency room had closed. She needs her health care system, Minister. The government can find billions of dollars to hand out in corporate tax cuts and pay well-connected consultants \$1 million a day, while Bob, Christine, and countless Ontario families are told to accept cuts to their health care. How can this minister support such an unfair, unbalanced approach?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's very, very important—I think people in this House know, but anyone who is watching this should understand that there are no cuts to health care; quite the opposite. We have continued to improve and enhance health care in this province since we were elected in 2003. I invite people to think back to 2003, when people were waiting in excess of a year for hip replacements, for knee replacements, and more than that for cataract surgery. People could not find a family doctor. In fact, I had constituents in London who were travelling to Toronto to visit their family doctor because they couldn't get a new doctor in London. We have made tremendous progress since we were elected in 2003, and I'm very proud of the progress.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Deputy Premier and Minister of Infrastructure: According to the fall economic statement, the McGuinty Liberals' stimulus plan adds an additional \$500 million to Minister Smitherman's minis-

try this year alone. What we know now is that while at the Ministry of Health, the minister was responsible for some 80% of the scandalous eHealth spending, some of which went to the stimulus of Karli Farrow, John Ronson and consultants at the Courtyard Group. Questions still remain, as we know, about how much more of the \$837 million that he handled went to Liberal-friendly consultants.

I want to ask the minister: If the Premier does not call a public inquiry for this billion-dollar scandal and clear the air, how can he expect public confidence in his ability to oversee yet an additional \$500 million of the public's money?

Hon. George Smitherman: First and foremost, I say to the honourable member that when I left the Ministry of Health, there was not one employee of eHealth, this organization that he has spoken about, but I did have substantial responsibilities over the Smart Systems for Health organization. I inherited that from a predecessor minister, and in the time that I was responsible for it, we invested substantially in building the infrastructure which supports the coming to life of an electronic health record. Clearly, the auditor has made comment about areas where that could be done more effectively. We take responsibility, we accept those comments, and we'll work harder than ever to make sure that as we go forward, we give Ontarians what they need in the form of an electronic health record.

By way of supplementary, I'd be happy to go over some of those very tangible steps of progress that the patients and the people of the province of Ontario have received as a result of investments in Smart Systems.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: By way of supplementary, I want the minister to answer my question, and that is that it's very clear that the auditor did not clear Minister Smitherman of mishandling public money. There is no denying that Minister Smitherman has close ties to Courtyard and Liberal-friendly consultants who received millions of taxpayer dollars in untendered contracts.

A public inquiry would give the minister the chance to restore his integrity once and for all. So I ask the minister: The only thing standing between him and being able to clear his name is a public inquiry that would answer all of those questions. Will the minister tell us if he objects to a public inquiry that would shine light on the facts that he disputes, and if he does object, why?

Hon. George Smitherman: But it's the honourable member that disputes the facts. It's the honourable member who's unwilling to acknowledge that substantial progress has been made with respect to the investment that the people of Ontario have made related to the electronic health record project. I don't need clearance from the honourable member. I know that the time I spent at the Ministry of Health is associated with substantial advancement in access to health care for the people of the province. All of the honourable member's political rhetoric and attack aside, the 600,000 additional people who gained access to a family physician as a result of the

efforts that I was privileged to make is satisfactory for me.

But on the issue of Smart Systems for Health, we have substantial accomplishments that occurred towards building the network site and creating the capacity for the information at the heart of an electronic health record to travel amongst the thousands and thousands of points of health care—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AUTISM TREATMENT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. According to her ministry's most recent quarterly numbers, the McGuinty government's autism program is not living up to the Premier's promise of ensuring that children with autism receive treatment regardless of their age. The IBI/ABA numbers for April through June 2009 continue to be troubling. Compared to the previous quarter, 1,649 children are waiting for IBI, 136 more than previously reported, and another 114 children have been abruptly cut off.

Why are more children with autism waiting for treatment, and why are more children having their treatment suddenly cut off and terminated?

1100

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This is a file where I'm very pleased to be able to build on the work that's been done by our government and a variety of Ministers of Children and Youth Services since we took office in 2003. We've made a lot of progress. Kids are getting the help they need, we've expanded those services, and we're working to make sure that families also have the support they need. We're working to maintain that progress and push ahead, working with parents and experts. Over the last couple of years, we've been examining how we can do better for our kids in Ontario.

I had the opportunity last week to visit Surrey Place and speak directly with the experts and find out how they think we can best help kids in Ontario. There is more work to do—there is always more work to do. We continue to build on the efforts that we've put in place to make sure that Ontario kids get everything they need from our education system and that envelope of services around them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's been six years. These children and these families cannot wait any longer for this government to get its act together when it comes to the autism file.

The regular quarterly numbers don't lie. The government is cutting off more children from IBI when schools are not able to provide the therapy. Instead of funding treatment, the government is allowing waiting lists to balloon and children to languish. When will parents see adequate service levels and proper funding for children's autism treatment?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I want to put some key facts on the table. We removed the previous government's age 6 cut-off and more than tripled autism spending, from \$44 million to \$165 million. We've more than doubled the number of kids getting IBI treatment—more than 1,300 now, up from just over 500 four years ago. We've introduced respite programs that serve almost 7,000 kids. The growing waiting list is not acceptable. That's why we've put more resources into the system.

But I would say that the numbers being brought forward by the leader of the opposition are consistent with numbers that we've seen in the past: 114 kids have completed the services for IBI, and we now have 1,262 kids receiving that service.

We need to get service to more kids. We need to broaden that continuum of support. That's why we're working with world-renowned experts like Peter Szatmari and Nancy Freeman and why we've brought that group of expertise to the table to make sure that kids in our schools get the treatment—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My question today is for the Minister of Transportation. Ontarians agree that driving while using hand-held communications and entertainment devices is a very dangerous practice. Most people recognize that driving while distracted is unacceptable. However, on a daily basis we still see individuals who choose to drive their vehicles while talking on cellphones and engaging in other distracting behaviours.

In 2006, I introduced a private member's bill that looked at distracted driving and novice drivers. I'm pleased to see that the government took this concept one step further, addressing distractions for drivers of all levels and ages.

I understand that today is the first day this new law comes into effect. My constituents are pleased to see this. However, how will this bill be enforced? What is and what isn't allowed to be used while driving? What will the fines be? Will the minister share with this House what the new law means for drivers all across this province?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to thank both the member for Oakville and the member for Durham. I think they both deserve applause for bringing forward an important piece of legislation.

As the member for Oakville noted today, this is the first day of the distracted driving legislation coming into effect.

Mr. Peter Shurman: You were on CFRB this morning.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I was on CFRB; you're right.

What we will see prohibited while driving includes the use of hand-held cellphones, BlackBerrys, text messaging, e-mailing, and any electronic device operated digitally with the hand. What will still be allowed are hands-

free wireless devices, such as an earpiece or a Bluetooth device.

There will be a three-month educational period when police will pull over drivers who are using hand-held electronic devices. As of February 1, 2010, police will begin issuing tickets with a fine of up to \$500. They can still lay charges—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: My question is once again for the Minister of Transportation. We all look forward to sharing the information he has provided, certainly with my constituents, but I do have further questions.

It's an important day for Ontario. The legislation will not only affect the driving behaviour of most Ontarians; it's also going to affect the millions of tourists who visit our province every year. There are studies out there that show that a driver using a cellphone is four times more likely to be in a crash than a driver who is focused on the road. Most people recognize that both dialing and texting while driving can be very dangerous behaviours. Common sense allows most people to understand the need for this type of legislation.

Today I'm wondering how we're going to advise the public that this government has delivered on making roads safer. Is there a planned publicity campaign to inform the general public and those who visit our province? Through you, Speaker, I was hoping the minister would be able to share with this House what steps will be taken—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: On top of the already extensive television, radio and print media coverage, the MTO will use a number of ways to reach out to the public during the three-month educational period. These would include a targeted public education campaign emphasizing keeping your hands on the wheel and your eyes on the road; information cards outlining details of the new law, made widely available to the public as well as to our road safety and police partners for distribution; a variety of hands-free safety messages to be placed in rotation on our COMPASS signs; road signs on our highways at border crossings and other strategic locations; updating our website and road safety education curriculum; and other local community initiatives.

It's important to remember that anyone who chooses to drive while distracted can also be charged with careless driving or dangerous driving, both of which carry severe fines and could lead to jail time and demerit point penalties.

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Deputy Premier. Instead of giving taxpayers accurate information about Ontario's debt, the Premier seems more interested in PR schemes to sell his dismal economic performance. On page 60 of the economic statement, the McGuinty

Liberals compare Ontario's debt-to-GDP to other jurisdictions in order to suggest that our provincial economy is in the middle of the pack. But the information is taken from a period before the full brunt of the global economic crisis was known. There's no doubt that the information is misleading. Was it intentional?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: I withdraw that, but there's no doubt that the information gives Ontarians an incorrect picture of our comparative financial situation. Was it intentional?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw that last comment, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I refer the member to page 60—he has quoted that—and he'll see that the data between the graphs is comparable for the year ended March 31, 2009. It's designed to show the relative position of Ontario with the OECD countries as well as with our sister provinces. It is the most accurate and up-to-date information that's available to the people of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: It's old information, and the minister may believe the inaccurate comparison, but international investors won't. DBRS has already lowered Ontario's credit rating, and others are soon to follow.

Because of the McGuinty Liberals, Ontario's deficit-to-revenue ratio is 27%—deficit, \$25 billion; revenue, \$90 billion—the highest in Canada. That's the worst in Canada. Every hour of every day, Canada's worst government spends \$2.8 million more than it collects in revenue. When will the McGuinty Liberals start giving a credible plan to get Ontario out of this mess and stop giving us misleading PR campaigns?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask the honourable member to withdraw the last comments, please.

Mr. Norm Miller: Withdrawn.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Just by way of comparison, interest on the debt in 2000-01, for instance, was \$10.9 billion or 16.4% as a percentage of revenue. That was under his party's watch. Even though we're in the midst of the worst downturn since the Great Depression, our interest as a percentage of revenue is only 10.4%.

1110

There's no doubt the economy has gone through a terrible downturn internationally, but our government has invested in people. We've invested in people by creating stimulus, by investing in infrastructure—\$32.5 billion over two years. We have invested in the so-called built-in stabilizers. We have not cut the things that that member and his party want to cut. It's the right policy for the times. As we move out of this, we will begin to address

the deficit challenges that are facing all governments around the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. On October 7, Nortel pensioners came to Queen's Park to ask this government to fulfill its obligations to laid-off and retired workers in this province. They came here to seek support from the McGuinty Liberals with their severance, benefits and pensions. Why is this government ignoring the plight Nortel employees are having with their severance, benefits and pensions and shirking its provincial responsibilities?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The Nortel situation is, indeed, a challenging one. To those families that are experiencing the anxiety that goes with the bankruptcy of this company, of course our government is empathetic and sympathetic. That's why we've met with the employees—

Mr. Howard Hampton: I saw the executives; the executives are doing fine.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: No, I saw executives, and they're not doing fine, Mr. Hampton. Unlike you, they lost their pensions. You kept yours, but they didn't.

It's not just a matter—it's a matter affecting all employees.

Government after government in this province refused to fund the pension benefits guarantee fund. We have made changes to it to give us greater flexibility.

We will continue to work with Nortel through this bankruptcy position. There's no doubt—the member is right—it's a very—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: We're tired of this government's whitewashing rhetoric. We're tired of them leaving laid-off and unemployed workers in the lurch while they pad the pockets of their consultant buddies. And we're really tired of them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I reminded members about impugning motive. Please withdraw the comment.

Mr. Paul Miller: I withdraw.

We really are tired of them playing pensioners like a Ping-Pong game, fobbing them off to other levels of government.

When will the McGuinty Liberals stop ignoring Nortel and all the other pensioners in this province? When will they implement the Arthurs recommendation, their own consultant's recommendation, to increase the pension benefits guarantee fund's monthly benefit to \$2,500? And when will this government finally stand up for pensioners and laid-off workers by enacting Bill 6, which would ensure laid-off workers the severance back pay owed to them by your own law?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite may not know this, but Professor Arthurs actually calls for

employees to make much larger contributions to the PBGF. If you're supporting that, that's fine.

What we've done is followed up on his recommendation to do a complete actuarial study of the fund. That is under way. I expect, as I indicated in the budget, to be bringing that to this House probably in late winter, early spring.

There's no doubt that these people at Nortel, the families across Ontario, are very anxious. One can't blame them. Our government is working with them on this circumstance. There's a federal overlay in terms of bankruptcy protection and the place of pensions relative to other creditors.

What we don't need is tired, worn-out rhetoric from people like that member who offer no solutions, only more empty language.

FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Minister, some time ago our government took the steps to ensure that full-time, professional firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and compassion in the event of an illness caused by the very dangerous work that they do. We brought in legislation and regulation to support full-time, professional firefighters who develop certain cancers or suffer from heart injury as a result of their job. At the time, the then Minister of Labour indicated that our government would be determining how this legislation would apply to part-time and volunteer firefighters. I would like to ask the minister if he could tell us a little bit more about where we are with that particular issue.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for Brant for his advocacy and for his tireless work on this issue. I know I've had the opportunity to have some very positive discussions with the member regarding the expansion of presumptive legislation for volunteer and part-time firefighters.

Many of you here may know that the Premier made a commitment in 2007 to review how volunteer and part-time firefighters could be covered by presumptive legislation, and at that time our government began working with stakeholders and advocates to ensure that we got this policy right. Our government recognizes the hazardous, life-threatening work that these firefighters do, and we've taken steps to ensure that firefighters and their families are treated with dignity and respect. Volunteer firefighters are crucial to so many communities across our province—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: I know that you are working with various organizations that appreciate the work you're doing. Thank you. Presumptive legislation allows for the creation of regulations that recognize prescribed diseases and heart injuries as presumed to be work-related in firefighters unless the contrary is shown.

It is important that we continue to work with volunteer firefighters and the Firefighters Association of Ontario on

how legislation will apply to volunteers and part-time firefighters. It's important that President Bill Burns, past President Dave Thomson and their team, along with the Ontario Association of Fire Chiefs, understand that this is progressing. Many of my constituents have sent letters of support for this presumptive legislation. I know the government has recognized this, and they realize that it's a hazard for firefighters in this job that they do.

Can the minister tell us a little bit more about the discussions and how they're proceeding, and what's being done to expand the legislation for volunteer firefighters? This is an issue that we've been working on, contrary to what some people have indicated in the House, and I would appreciate the minister—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: With the member's tremendous support, we have been making great progress. I have to say that I've read many letters from municipalities, from ill volunteer firefighters and, sadly, from widows. I do not take lightly the responsibility I have over 18,000 volunteer firefighters, part-time firefighters and fire investigators who help all of our communities across this province.

As the member mentioned, earlier this month, my colleague from Brant and I met with a number of individuals to discuss this important matter, including the president of the Firefighters Association of Ontario, Bill Burns, and past president, Dave Thomson; and our health and safety representative and WSIB committee chair, Darren Storey. Consultations with part-time and volunteer firefighters continue. I appreciate the Firefighters Association of Ontario's continued support, and I look forward to working with them.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: My question is for the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, will you table a report setting out the additional resources required to enforce the Child Pornography Reporting Act?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: The act which the member opposite speaks about is one that is in a field that I have worked on for many, many years. Bill 37, the Child Pornography Reporting Act, was my private member's bill under the last session, and I'm very pleased that child safety is of paramount concern to the government. As I drafted the bill, I consulted with a range of groups, including the Canadian centre for child abuse, The Gatehouse, Beyond Borders, KINSA and representatives from the OPP and the Toronto police forces. Since the bill passed, my new ministry, the Ministry of Children and Youth Services, has been consulting closely with those agencies again: the Canadian Centre for Child Protection, the government of Manitoba, the Ministry of the Attorney General and the Ministry of Community and Social Services. I'm extremely proud of the legislation, and I look forward to the finalization of the regulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I asked the minister if she would table the report, because it will mean additional resources

to children's aid societies. You obviously don't care what onus your private member's bill will put on the children's aid societies across Ontario. Your bill specifically broadens the responsibility of children's aid societies, yet your government is not willing to fund children's aid societies for the mandate they have right now. Thirty-seven out of 51 children's aid societies have told you they cannot fulfill their current legislated mandates.

Minister, you mentioned you called the Ontario Association of Children's Aid Societies. What services have you recommended they cut from their budgets?

1120

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: Let's put some facts on the table because facts are imperative here. Over the last 10 years, funding for CASs has gone from \$500 million to \$1.4 billion. Our CASs across the province are protecting kids.

I want to speak for a moment with respect to protecting Ontario's kids from child pornography. That's who my priority is. That's who I care about, member opposite. I care about the kids in Ontario. This private member's bill put obligations on all of us to report incidents of child pornography.

I know what my bill did and it told all of us, including children's aid societies, including businesses, including individuals, that you can't be a bystander when kids are being abused. Every depiction of child pornography is a depiction of a child being sexually abused. Every depiction of child pornography is evidence of a crime. Those are the kids I care about.

Frankly, I think we can all step up a little bit and protect Ontario's kids better, and that's why I'm very proud to be part of a government—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I just remind honourable members, as I have in the past, if they're dissatisfied with an answer, file a late show.

New question.

NORTHERN ECONOMY

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The McGuinty government's so-called northern growth plan makes no mention of the 40,000 direct and indirect Ontario forestry jobs that have vanished. Is the minister wearing blinders? Or does he think that if he just ignores it, the devastation is going to go away?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I was very pleased, along with my colleague the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George Smitherman, to release the northern growth plan last Friday both in Sudbury and in Thunder Bay. This is a document that is created by northerners, for northerners. It reflects their concerns and their recommendations for action, and there are many actionable items.

May I say, in terms of the specifics of the leader's question, the fact is, there are recommendations related to our need for forest tenure review, our recognition that indeed there is a transformation within the forestry sector and we must move forward in terms of wood supply allocation and other issues related to that as well.

So indeed, this is a document that relates to the potential for job creation in northern Ontario and is a real priority. We've very pleased indeed that we're now moving toward our final consultation process with communities in northern Ontario to further get some thoughts from our northerners. This is about job creation. It's about actionable items. We're very proud of this, as are all northerners. This is their document.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Six years later and the McGuinty government continues to fail Ontario's forestry sector. More than half of the promised forestry aid sits unused in a government bank account as 40,000 unemployed northerners try to pick up the pieces. The government's so-called plan makes five forestry recommendations, none of which do a damn thing to address the sky-high electricity costs that are killing forestry jobs in this province.

How could this government's so-called northern Ontario plan ignore the most important issue that faces Ontario's forestry industry?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The northern Ontario growth plan very specifically addresses that, plus many other aspects of the economic development needs in northern Ontario.

Interjection: I think she should read it.

Hon. Michael Gravelle: And I think the member should read it, exactly, and I encourage everyone to read it.

I was startled, indeed, by some of the comments made by your colleague from Kenora, who made no mention whatsoever of the incredible opportunity we have for the upgrade of the transmission lines in northern Ontario, particularly the priority line between Nipigon and Pickle Lake, which will bring stability and extra energy needs to the Musselwhite Mine in his riding, which he ignores, which will potentially take some First Nation communities off diesel and on to the electricity grid in his riding.

This report reflects the concerns that northerners have and the recommendations they've put forward. We have remarkable support from all across the north. We're looking forward to moving forward with this and our government is very proud of this plan.

RURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Being connected is vital for both our social and economic well-being. Given the importance of being connected in today's day and age, access to broadband infrastructure should be available to as many Ontarians as possible, including our farmers, rural businesses and rural residents.

Broadband access will encourage the use of technology, whether it's local farmers checking satellite weather imagery, rural businesses conducting their businesses, or families communicating with distant relatives or children at school. In my riding, municipal economic development offices are looking to attract businesses to locate in their municipalities, but often barriers, including access to fast Internet connections, stand in the way of companies deciding to locate in the area.

Could the minister let the House know about the steps the government is taking to ensure rural access to broadband infrastructure?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It's a very good question, because providing rural broadband infrastructure is absolutely essential for the health and well-being in rural communities.

In 2007, our government committed over \$27.4 million for 47 broadband projects across rural southern Ontario through the Rural Connections initiatives. Our government continues to address broadband gaps in Ontario through two particular funding initiatives. One, we've committed \$32.75 million to support projects in partnership with the federal broadband Canada initiative, the Connecting Rural Canadians program. We have also announced our commitment of up to \$55 million to fund a regional broadband project in eastern Ontario.

I was in a school on Friday where the students are using smart boards. They're able to do that in a small rural community because—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My constituents will be pleased to know that our government is working to provide them with further opportunities to connect socially and commercially. The ability to connect through broadband infrastructure will allow for the continued success and the prosperity of rural Ontario. My constituents were especially pleased to hear that our government has committed to fund regional broadband infrastructure. These investments will ensure that the municipalities are able to move ahead with much-needed projects, and certainly in a timely fashion.

Minister, over the summer you announced a second intake of projects through the Rural Connections broadband program to address the broadband gaps in rural southern Ontario. Could the minister please give the House an update on the status of these vital broadband infrastructure projects?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: With respect to the program that was announced, there is an expectation that they would be complete by the year 2012. I'm also pleased to report that we have had steady progress with the 14 intake one projects that are underway, with 14 to be completed in the next six months. Intake two projects are also progressing well, with two projects under way and another nine at the stage of negotiations with the Internet service providers. In total, 26 of the 29 that were announced in intake one and intake two are in the RFP process.

In the member's own riding of Bruce county, they are going to receive \$1 million of provincial funding toward a project valued at just over \$3 million. This is good news for the people of the member's riding. We expect that many rural communities across Ontario will benefit from this very important investment in broadband.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: We're now in week 10 of the work stoppage at DriveTest centres across the province. Jobs are being lost because truck drivers can't upgrade their licences. New drivers can't get licences and so they can't get jobs; they can't enrol in driving training programs or in college programs.

The minister knows that the contract that was entered into with Serco obligates that company, under contract, to ensure that wait times for road tests are no more than six weeks, that there are acceptable service levels, that the MTO would safeguard the public interest under the terms of that contract. Serco is not meeting its obligations under the contract that they have with the province of Ontario. Why has the Minister of Transportation not stepped in to ensure that they meet those obligations and that Ontarians are not held hostage?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: I hope that the member is not contemplating or suggesting that strikebreakers be used in this particular case. Perhaps he isn't, because that would be the only way, of course, that that service would continue, is if strikebreakers were used. I know that the member would not be advocating that. You will be aware that when your government signed the contract with Serco, it was a full 10-year contract.

The ministry has taken certain actions to protect those whose licences have expired, in some cases, and in the same category are able to continue. They've had extensions, in other words. We are going to extend further, if necessary, the deadlines that will assist people who are renewing.

I don't know what the member is contemplating in this particular case, but we—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: What I'm contemplating is the fact that Ontarians are hurting. It's not enough to extend deadlines. There are people who need to get into those tests to upgrade their licences. Jobs are being lost.

Here's what I'm suggesting to the minister. It has come to my attention that in fact an offer has been made but the union is refusing to put that offer to a vote by its members. The Minister of Labour has the authority to direct that an offer be put before the employees. I am asking the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Labour to ensure that at the very least an offer that has been put forward is put to a vote by the employees. That's what I'm asking.

Hon. James J. Bradley: The Minister of Labour has informed me that he has made available the very top

mediators within the Ministry of Labour of the province of Ontario to bring both sides together. He has urged them to come together. The mediator is available seven days a week, 24 hours a day, to work with both of the parties in this case.

When efforts are being made to reach a collective agreement, when there are discussions going on, I know that individual members of the Legislature such as myself, particularly ministers, can be unhelpful in this regard by coming down on one or the other side of the issue.

We know the great difficulties being faced by people, and I do know that the Minister of Labour is prepared to take appropriate action to bring the two sides together so we can finally get an agreement in this conflict.

ONTARIO CHILD BENEFIT

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Minister of Community and Social Services. On October 10, I asked the minister a question about social assistance rates. In her response, the minister said, "We have the Ontario child benefit that we're supposed to get up to \$1,100 ... by 2013, and we have advanced this investment this year so they"—and by "they" I assume she means families—"are receiving \$1,100." Could the minister please clarify her statement? Is she saying that all families on social assistance are now receiving the full \$1,100 child benefit?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you very much for the question.

Yes, this government is very proud because we moved forward with the Ontario child benefit, which is a signature piece from our government.

As the member knows, the Ontario child benefit is related to the income of the family so that's why it's not only people on social assistance who receive it. That's the beauty of it. People who are in the low-income bracket can benefit from the Ontario child benefit.

Every situation is a different situation. You need to give me a special case, and we will be able to tell you how much the family will receive.

It's benefiting all the families that are in the low-income bracket and we're very pleased with that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the minister and she doesn't have a clue. The fact is that not all families receive the full increase to the child benefit. For example, on July 1, the government increased the child benefit paid to a single parent with a child over age 13 by \$42 a month, but at the same time the McGuinty government decreased the basic needs allowance paid to this family by \$41 a month, leaving a net increase in benefits of \$1 a month. Why does this government think that some Ontario families should receive the full child benefit and others, those with 13-year-old children, should not?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: First of all, I'd like to remind the member on the other side that he voted

against the Ontario child benefit. We are very proud of it. It's a restructuring of social service assistance, and it was a request from the community: They wanted to have the benefits for children outside of social assistance, and that's exactly what we did.

On top of that, we've increased social assistance since we came to power. This coming November and December, the increase will be 11% since 2003. It's a lot better than what they did when they were in power, and it's a lot better than what the Tories did when they were in power, because they cut social assistance by 22%. A lot of families were in very difficult situations when that happened.

This government is very sensitive to the needs of people on—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

The time for question period has ended, and there being no deferred votes, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1136 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROAD SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I rise in the House today to pay tribute to the member for Durham, John O'Toole, and his advocacy against driver distraction. As of today, we all know that a new law prevents Ontario drivers from talking, texting, typing, dialing and e-mailing using hand-held cellphones and other devices.

My colleague Mr. O'Toole was among the first legislators in our country to raise this issue through a private member's bill on distracted driving that he tabled right here in this House in the year 2000. Since then, he's been very serious on this issue of public safety. He kept the issue on our agenda with five similar bills.

Today, the province of Ontario joins Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia and Quebec in restricting the use of electronic devices while driving. Manitoba has also passed driver distraction legislation.

Ontario's legislation is a good example of the parliamentary process at work, and it's a result of grassroots advice from citizens, along with input from researchers, police, doctors, insurers and many other stakeholders, as well as elected MPPs.

I would like to commend all those who were part of the process, but I would especially like to congratulate our colleague John O'Toole for his leadership on this public safety issue. It is an example why private member's legislation does work. It took a long time for it to get through, but in the end, the government listened. I know John O'Toole wasn't included today in some of the fancy press announcements, but everyone in this country and this province knows that John O'Toole was responsible for this legislation.

CITY OF CORNWALL

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to congratulate the city of Cornwall in my riding of Stormont—Dundas—South Glengarry, which has recently been ranked by the Canadian Federation of Independent Business as the fifth-highest Ontario community for entrepreneurship.

The communities were ranked based on a variety of factors, including net business start-ups, employment diversity, self-employment statistics, hiring expectations and local government involvement in business. Studies have shown that Canada offers many cost and quality-of-life advantages, and Ontario—and the 401 corridor in particular—is the first choice of most investors.

Cornwall enjoys a strategic location on Highway 401 between Toronto and Montreal and is just an hour's drive south of Ottawa, the nation's capital. This vital transportation link means that Cornwall companies can ship products efficiently and cost-effectively anywhere in North America, including international shipping ports.

Cornwall is not only part of Canada's most important transportation network, but it is also a vital link with an international border crossing to New York state. The strategic location offers companies advantages that go beyond the movement of goods, and transportation is quite easy by car, train, boat or air. Two international airports and the Cornwall Regional Airport are close by, and Cornwall is an important link on VIA Rail's passenger train service, allowing citizens to connect with people anywhere in the world.

Because quality of life continues to top most site selectors' lists, Cornwall's location on the shores of the St. Lawrence River adds just one more element to this mix. I'm very happy to congratulate Cornwall on this ranking in entrepreneurship.

WIND FARMS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I stand before this chamber today to support the private member's resolution of my Progressive Conservative caucus mate Bill Murdoch, MPP for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound.

Mr. Murdoch is calling for a moratorium on wind farms throughout Ontario until more studies have been completed on the health effects wind turbines may cause.

The residents in the village of North Gower have contacted me regarding their concerns about a wind farm in our own community. During the committee hearings on the Green Energy Act, MPPs, including myself, heard from dozens of Ontarians who have warned us against the potential health hazards and impacts of those whose homes are near a wind farm.

Perhaps the biggest failure of the Green Energy Act—and there are many failures—is that local planning is taken away from local communities in favour of a made-in-Toronto plan by the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. For the residents in my Nepean—Carleton riding, the only option left for us for any public input on

this wind farm that the Liberal government wants to impose on our small community is Mr. Murdoch's resolution on a moratorium. Nepean—Carleton right now is battling two encroachments in our small rural community: not only the wind farm in North Gower but also the doubling of the size of Manotick because provincial bureaucrats, not local politicians, are dictating our—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To our friend the Minister of Transportation, I've got to say that there are many people across this province who are anxiously awaiting your taking some action when it comes to the long labour dispute that's been going on at DriveTest. Now, I'm not going to pronounce one side or the other as at fault or right; the point is that there's a labour dispute that is unresolved and, as a result of that, there are thousands of people across this province and in my constituency who cannot get their driver's licence renewed or get a brand new driver's licence.

We have all kinds of issues. Bus companies that are trying to get people to drive your kids to school every day are running out of drivers and literally are in a position where some of the bus runs are having to be cancelled because there are not enough drivers to go around. Why? Because they are not able to get their certification to be able to drive a bus. As you know, in that industry there is a turnover of people, and now they're finding it extremely difficult to find new drivers.

I've got paramedics who have come to my office saying, "I am able to get a job. I've been certified, I'm ready to go, but I need to get a special licence to drive an ambulance." They can't do that. Why? Because at DriveTest we have a labour dispute.

We have the general public, who are just at their wits' end trying to get their drivers' licences renewed or trying to get a brand new driver's licence for the first time, and again are unable to do so.

So I say to the Minister of Transportation across the way, my good friend Mr. Bradley, you've got to intervene in this particular labour dispute and find some way to get the parties together to solve this, because if not, there are a lot of people who are going to be hurting over the next fall and winter.

ON-TRACK

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak about On-Track, a career and employment service for women program that began in 1999 north of Toronto. On-Track is making significant contributions to career changes of women in my riding of Scarborough Southwest and in our city of Toronto in general.

On-Track offers women a variety of employment skills, including its Trading Up program, that steer women into the skilled trades and apprenticeship career options. Trading Up is a ministry-funded program geared

to assisting women 18 years of age and older to re-enter the workforce. This three-week program teaches women to manage change and to develop skills training, communication, decision-making, resumé writing, cover letter, interview and presentation skills, among other things.

This year, On-Track has partnered with Centennial College's automotive service technicians for women program and Seneca College's early childhood education. In the last decade, On-Track has literally helped hundreds of women return to the workforce.

At the root of On-Track's success are the tireless and selfless efforts of its executive director, Marie Heron, and her staff. On the 10th anniversary of On-Track, I extend on behalf of this House congratulations and best wishes to Marie Heron, her staff, and all the women who have benefited from On-Track's programs to get them back on track.

TRANSPORTATION PLANNING

Mr. Frank Klees: Ontarians are becoming increasingly frustrated with the gridlock on our roads and highways. In the words of a Windsor resident, "I cannot begin to express the frustration that I have experienced trying to simply move around this province in the last two years."

What is of particular concern is the apparent mismanagement of highway projects and the resulting impact on traffic flow. Ramps to and from 400-series highways are closed almost daily with no on-road advance notice to drivers that would at least allow them to take an earlier alternate exit. Predictably, the result is more congestion and more frustration, and the addition of often many additional kilometres of unnecessary detour.

The gross mismanagement of 401 service centres can only be described as incompetence at its worst. To shut down service centres along this province's busiest highway with no alternative provided for travellers' comfort, to rest and to refuel, is beyond comprehension.

As much as the minister attempts to justify these examples of his ministry's incompetence, what matters is that the lives of Ontarians are being put at risk. That, I trust you will agree, is unacceptable.

I call on the Minister of Transportation to get a handle on his ministry, to call to account those individuals who are responsible for planning in his ministry and tell them to get on with it.

1310

NORTH YORK HISTORICAL SOCIETY

Mr. David Zimmer: I am pleased to congratulate the North York Historical Society for receiving Heritage Toronto's 2009 Community Heritage Award. It's an honour presented to one volunteer-based organization in each of Toronto's four community council areas for a significant activity that promotes or protects heritage in the area.

The mission of the North York Historical Society is to protect, preserve and promote the cultural heritage that defines North York and the Willowdale area. An example of the important work done by the North York Historical Society is Gibson House, which was identified as a historical building way back in 1960. The society lobbied for the preservation, restoration and adaptive reuse of this house as a museum. With the support of the society, Gibson House Museum opened in 1971. They've done marvellous things to enrich that heritage and make everyone aware of it.

The society continues its work in this regard, including the Dempsey store in North York and John McKenzie House—which, incidentally, serves as the headquarters for the Ontario Historical Society.

Heritage in Toronto is important to its citizens. The North York Historical Society has made a major contribution and should be congratulated.

VOLUNTEERS

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Today I rise to congratulate all of the unsung heroes in Brampton. I'm referring to the everyday individuals who go out of their way to volunteer their precious time to make a difference in our community.

These people do not volunteer their time because they believe they will receive a financial reward at the end of the day. They do this because they believe in our community and they know that their effort will pay off by inspiring future generations to take up the cause.

I firmly believe that volunteering in our community is quite important, with volunteers like Angela Johnson, who donates her time to various organizations, including organizing our spelling bee right here in Brampton and helping to make Carabram a huge success in our city. Angela never asks for anything in return. She is selfless and is to be commended.

That is why I have decided to hold Brampton West's first annual volunteer awards celebration. This will be an opportunity for residents to nominate an individual who has demonstrated exemplary volunteer service. I'm proud to say that Angela will be our first person nominated for this recognition. Those selected will be honoured at an awards ceremony in my riding in the near future.

ANNIVERSARY OF THE SINKING OF THE GRAF SPEE

Mr. Joe Dickson: The town of Ajax has celebrated the efforts of the Royal Navy veterans in World War II's first Allied major naval victory. Exactly 70 years ago, hundreds of young sailors on HMS Ajax, Exeter and Achilles fought against the infamous Admiral Graf Spee battleship, destroying that German ship, considered one of the best in the world.

The few remaining living sailors and spouses were treated to a week of honour by Ajax residents, including a massed band musical tribute on October 4. The dedi-

cation of the Ajax legacy obelisk was unveiled. The week was chaired by Councillor Pat Brown. Ajax always remembers its veterans.

Guests of honour were many, including the Honourable David Onley, Lieutenant Governor of Ontario, and his wife, courtesy of our mayor, Mr. Parish, and Ajax councillors Jordan, Crawford, Collier, Ashby, Dies and Brown. The massed band performers included the RCSCC Harwood band, Ajax; the pipes and drums of RCL branch 43, Oshawa; the concert band of Cobourg, the band of Her Majesty's Royal Marines; the HMCS York band, Toronto; and the Pickering community concert band.

The final honour of the week was a flyover of the Ajax waterfront by a giant C-130 Hercules of the Canadian Air Force.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON ESTIMATES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Estimates.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): Mr. Dunlop from the Standing Committee on Estimates presents the committee's report as follows:

Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the following supplementary estimates (2009-10) are reported back to the House as they were not selected by the committee for consideration.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Pursuant to standing order 62(c), the report of the committee is deemed to be received and the supplementary estimates of the ministries named therein as not being considered for consideration by the committee are deemed to be concurred in.

Report deemed received.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's always a pleasure to be here and attentive during petition time. My petition here is:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that may result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in small communities; and

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to improve rather than be cut; and

"Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives to rural communities and small towns needed to attract and retain doctors."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it through Elliott, one of the pages here.

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Hassan and Ali Chaudhry of Mississauga for having collected it through the Effort group in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a retail sales transaction in Ontario should not be subject to two separate taxes, at two different rates, under two sets of rules and payable to two different levels of government; and

"Whereas Ontario will implement a comprehensive package of income and business tax cuts in 2010, which will especially benefit working families and retired seniors; and

"Whereas the income taxes of Ontarians will be cut permanently, seniors will receive double their former property tax credit and other permanent savings will flow to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the cost to businesses to produce goods will go down permanently as embedded sales tax is permanently eliminated from the business cycle, enabling these businesses to lower business costs and pass savings along to their customers; and

"Whereas these measures represent the most comprehensive tax reform in a half century, enabling Ontario to be the most competitive place in North America to create jobs, move, grow and operate a business;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario and the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly support measures to swiftly enact Ontario's comprehensive tax reform measures, including the move to a single sales tax as proposed in the province's 2009-10 budget."

It's an excellent petition. I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page James to carry it for me.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ServiceOntario will be terminating existing contracts with the approximately 60 independently owned and operated driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices in Ontario, we request that the Legislative Assembly stop the closures of these offices.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The most efficient method of delivering driver and vehicle licence services to the public of Ontario is through privately owned facilities. Independent operators have an incentive to provide prompt, courteous service to their customers, many of whom they have been serving for years. Replacing experienced private issuers with ServiceOntario (government) employees will, at minimum, incur unnecessary training, salary and benefits, and facility costs which must be passed on to the taxpayer. Please keep our current issuers in business and their staff employed, providing the excellent service to which we are accustomed."

I'm pleased to sign that on behalf of my constituents.

1320

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by many Ontarians from Unionville, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic original heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with the petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it is signed by over 10,000 loyal citizens of Milton. It states:

"Whereas the town of Milton is the fastest-growing community in Canada, with a population that is expected to surpass 100,000 by 2014; and

"Whereas the Milton District Hospital is designed to serve a population of 30,000; and

"Whereas young families, seniors and all residents of Milton are currently unable to access quick and reliable health care; and

"Whereas the excellent doctors and nurses at Milton District Hospital are constrained by unacceptable conditions and a lack of resources;

"We, the undersigned, petition the government of Ontario to immediately approve and initiate the process to expand Milton District Hospital and to provide

adequate interim measures to prevent further suffering for the people of Milton."

I agree with this petition, I'm glad to sign my name and give it to Bethany to carry to the table.

DIABETES TREATMENT

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for recognizing me on this very important petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas elementary school-aged children in the province of Ontario suffering from diabetes require regular blood sugar monitoring and may also require insulin and glucagon to manage their disease; and

"Whereas there is no medical or nursing assistance readily available in schools as there was in the past; and

"Whereas the parents/guardians of these children must currently visit their child's school several times throughout the day in order to test their child's blood sugar levels; and

"Whereas the absence of medical support in our elementary schools results in substantial stress and disruption to the lives of children and their working parents;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That elementary schools in the province of Ontario have on-site staff trained in the daily monitoring of blood sugar levels of children who suffer from diabetes; and

"(2) That the trained staff also administer insulin and glucagon when required, with the consent of the child's parent/guardian."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present petitions from my riding of Durham, which read as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this, and present it to Katelyn, one of the pages.

SHARK FISHERY

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a number of petitions here. This one here is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to stop shark finning.

"Whereas over 100 million sharks are being brutally killed, mutilated and butchered by the abhorrent practice of shark finning, which involves the removal of the fins of live sharks and then throwing the finless, immobile, live shark back into the ocean, where it is destined for a slow and torturous death, by either suffocation or attack by a predator;

"Whereas sharks are a vital component of the ocean's interconnected ecosystem, leading ecologists to warn that rapid decreases in shark populations will disturb the ocean's equilibrium...;

"Whereas the practice of shark finning can have disastrous effects on other fisheries...;

"Whereas the United Nations General Assembly itself has noted that the decline in the shark population could have 'an impact on broader ecosystem functions';

"We, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the prohibition of shark finning and to call upon the federal government to support the prohibition of this cruel act."

I support this petition. I'll affix my name to it.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This has been signed by about 1,100 people from the community of Penetanguishene.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ServiceOntario will be terminating existing contracts with the approximately 60 independently owned and operated driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices in Ontario, we request that the Legislative Assembly stop the closures of these offices.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The most efficient method of delivering driver and vehicle licence services to the public of Ontario is through privately owned facilities. Independent operators have an incentive to provide prompt, courteous service to their customers, many of whom they have been serving for years. Replacing experienced private issuers with ServiceOntario (government) employees will, at minimum, incur unnecessary training, salary and benefits, and facility costs which must be passed on to the taxpayer. Please keep our current issuers in business and their staff employed, providing the excellent service to which we are accustomed."

I'm pleased to sign that.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I'd like to acknowledge Cheryl Doran of Brampton for having collected the signatures on it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006, and youth violence is rising; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

"That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

A very eloquent statement; I'm pleased to sign and agree with it and to ask page Madeline to carry it for me.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's another petition from the citizens of Penetanguishene.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas ServiceOntario will be terminating existing contracts with the approximately 60 independently owned and operated driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices in Ontario, we request that the Legislative Assembly stop the closures of these offices.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The most efficient method of delivering driver and vehicle licence services to the public of Ontario is through privately owned facilities. Independent operators have an incentive to provide prompt, courteous service to their customers, many of whom they have been serving for years. Replacing experienced private issuers with ServiceOntario (government) employees will, at minimum, incur unnecessary training, salary and benefits, and facility costs which must be passed on to the taxpayer. Please keep our current issuers in business and their staff employed, providing the excellent service to which we are accustomed."

I'm pleased to sign that and give it to page Rushabh to present to the table.

TOM LONGBOAT

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of constituents of mine from South Glengarry and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Tom Longboat is Canada's greatest long-distance runner; and

"Whereas Tom Longboat is a great role model for all Canadians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass the Tom Longboat Day Act into law so that we can honour this remarkable athlete and courageous Canadian who is a great role model for all Canadians."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

1330

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I have another petition.

"Whereas the community of Waubaushene in the township of Tay has two entrances off Highway 400, one of which is the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance has had numerous accidents, including fatalities, over the past two decades; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance is very confusing and awkward for drivers trying to make left-hand turns onto Highway 12 from either Pine Street or the Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay have expressed grave concerns over the safety at the Pine Street-Highway 400 and Highway 12 intersection; and

"Whereas there is a strong feeling in the community that traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection would save lives;

"Therefore we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay and immediately install traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection."

I'm pleased to sign that and present it to Elliott to present to the table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS ACT (LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS AND OTHERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉTRANGERS DANS LE CADRE DE L'EMPLOI (AIDES FAMILIAUX ET AUTRES)

Mr. Fonseca moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers and in other prescribed employment and to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 /
Projet de loi 210, Loi visant à protéger les étrangers employés comme aides familiaux et dans d'autres emplois prescrits et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Mr. Speaker, I'll be sharing time with my parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton West.

I rise today to speak on this piece of legislation, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others), 2009. This proposed legislation would safeguard a group of employees who are among the most vulnerable in our province: foreign nationals who work as live-in caregivers.

Imagine this: In another part of the world—China, the Philippines, Singapore, the Emirates, the Caribbean—a foreign national picks up a local newspaper, reads an ad and sees an opportunity to work in what is seen as one of the best countries in the entire world, Canada.

As they look at that ad, they're the type of caring individuals who see themselves doing that type of service, working as live-in caregivers helping someone's family: maybe a family with young children; or an older adult lives at home and needs extra care, and the family needs that support. Someone may have a disabled child or adult in their home who needs 24/7 support through a live-in caregiver.

So the live-in caregiver answers the ad, goes to a location and hears about what they may find to be a dream world for them: an opportunity to come to work in the greater Toronto area, Ontario, Canada. They are given a talk by a recruiting agency. Then they are told about the fees that need to be paid to access that opportunity, and those are thousands and thousands of dollars. So, many of these live-in caregivers from around the world take out their life savings or borrow thousands of dollars to fulfill this dream to do work they want to do to help a family, maybe living in any one of our neighbourhoods, in one of our ridings.

They go through a process and, all along, this program is under the banner of our federal government: Canada's federal government temporary foreign worker live-in caregiver program. You feel pretty good when you think, "Do you know what? This program is being overseen by the federal government." So the live-in caregiver embarks on this journey, pays out thousands of dollars, finds themselves getting on a plane. They land at Pearson airport, come through Customs, and that's where the dream comes to an end.

Interjection.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member is making fun of something that is very serious. There are vulnerable workers who are being exploited, who are being mistreated, and the member is heckling these vulnerable workers. Shame on him.

The vulnerable worker arrives at Pearson, and this is where their dream turns into a nightmare. The recruiter

who is there to receive them under this federal live-in caregiver program tells them all of a sudden when they arrive there, "Oh, sorry. There is no employer. That employer no longer exists."

So the live-in caregiver—I'm sure his or her dreams are destroyed—now has a decision to make: How are they going to get back home, or what are they going to do while they're here?

The recruiter maybe takes them to a holding locale and many times takes away their passport, takes away their work permit. Why would they do this? They'll do this because that gives them control of that poor, vulnerable employee, that live-in caregiver who is here—and then puts them into precarious employment or puts them into a spot which was nothing like the picture that was painted for them many months ago as they were coming over to Canada, to Ontario, to Toronto.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Imagine how she felt when she walked into Ruby Dhalla's house.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The member keeps heckling exploited workers, vulnerable workers. I don't understand what this member is heckling about.

Our government sees this as something that needs to be dealt with quickly and forcefully. That is why we have looked at what is happening with these live-in caregivers. We have consulted, and through those consultations we have found every possible loophole that these unscrupulous recruiters are using to exploit these workers, and through this proposed legislation are trying to close every one of those, as well as continuing to work with the Canadian government, which administers this temporary foreign worker live-in caregiver program, so that they can fix many things that are outside of our jurisdiction of Ontario before those workers arrive.

Our government has responded very, very quickly, and at the same time, though, carefully and responsibly, to ensure that these vulnerable workers receive protections that they need and deserve.

This legislation is about compassion. Martin Luther King once wrote that he dreamt of a country where every man will respect the dignity and worth of the human personality. Recognition of the dignity and worth of others is at the heart of this bill.

Many in this House are aware that there have been reports of exploitation of employees who are part of this federal live-in caregiver program. There have been justifiable concerns raised about exorbitant job placement fees and other charges that have been levied on these live-in caregivers.

I want to thank the many advocates out there who have helped inform this proposed legislation. I want to thank Dale Brazao and Rob Cribb at the Toronto Star for their series on this very important issue and for shining the light on it. I want to thank Deena Ladd at the Workers' Action Centre and Mary Gellatly with Parkdale legal, Speaker, as you would know. I want to thank the many, many live-in caregivers who consulted, who opened up, who explained their stories, who shared their stories of exploitation—and if it wasn't happening to

them, the stories they heard from their colleagues, from their friends, as they met at church, as they met at community centres and as they spoke to each other and supported each other in a way to help address these wrongs.

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I want to thank my colleague Mike Colle, who met with many of the live-in caregivers, met with the consul general of the Philippines, and looked to see what we could do here at the provincial level to stop these abuses, as well as my parliamentary assistant, the member for Brampton West, who will be speaking and who was involved in those consultations throughout the summer.

There have also been reports of instances of some recruiters and employers who withheld the passports and documents of these workers.

As I said, these employees devote their lives to caring for our most loved ones. These are people whom we are entrusting with our babies, with someone who is not able to take care of themselves, who has a severe disability, with an aged mom or dad who may have dementia or Alzheimer's. They are caring for our loved ones. They deserve our care, our protections, to ensure that their rights are being upheld, and that's what we're doing with this legislation.

The protections this bill would provide were arrived at through our consultations this summer. We received much public input. These consultations helped identify and clarify the problem which is so international in scope. As I said, these live-in caregivers are coming here from all continents because they have been given information about what a great life they may have. And it's true. All of us, except for the First Nations, have immigrated to this country to find hope, to find opportunity. That's why people come here, and we provide that. We also provide protections for our workers, and these foreign nationals deserve those same protections.

The McGuinty government is moving forward now to do what we can to protect these vulnerable workers, these foreign nationals. Our proposed legislation would prohibit direct or indirect charging of any fees to caregivers, including those related to recruitment or job placement. This comprehensive ban would cover recruitment and placement fees for other supplementary services such as resumé writing, interview coaching etc.

We looked for all the possible loopholes: not just banning those fees that recruiters are directly levying on those live-in caregivers, but also roundabout ways that unscrupulous recruiters would envision as to how they could still charge and grab funds from these vulnerable workers. They may try to do it in a roundabout way, by levying those charges through the employer and then those monies would be receipted back to the recruiter. Those practices and many other types of tactics these unscrupulous individuals may try to use will not be allowed if this proposed legislation passes.

As I said, by some accounts, recruiters would make deals with employers. They would deduct those fees and try to get them in a different way. The recruiter in turn would give the employer a break in the fees that that employer, not the caregiver, should properly be paying.

Having heard these accounts of devious exploitation, we ensured that we would stop this type of practice done to our live-in caregivers.

Also, to hear that somebody's passport or work permit has been taken away from them—this is paramount to taking away somebody's freedom. You are holding somebody hostage. You are imprisoning somebody by taking that documentation because that person is now not able to find other employment, fears moving, fears being deported, and is stuck in what may be a very difficult situation.

Through this proposed legislation, we would give our employment standards officers the power to issue a warrant to come into a recruiting agency or, if need be, a home to get that documentation back for that live-in caregiver.

Also, our employment standards officers will not need to wait for a claim to be made or a complaint to be made by that live-in caregiver. We know that the community of live-in caregivers is a tight one. It's close. They talk to each other. If there are tips that our employment standards officers hear about, where these types of practices are happening at that recruitment agency, they can go out with a warrant and crack down on the agency—go in, inspect and see what is happening—to address the situation.

We know that, if this legislation were to pass, there will still be those out there who will think about breaking the law. What we have done is, we have put in the stiffest penalties in all of Canada. The penalties for those who would break the law under this proposed legislation would amount to up to \$50,000 and up to 12 months of jail time. In no other province, even where they have banned fees and brought in other protections, has anybody brought in jail time. We would have 12 months' worth of jail time also as part of this legislation.

This legislation is about more enforcement—strengthening our enforcement; ensuring that we have stiff penalties; bringing in provisions for issues that we've heard about, like the withholding of personal documentation; and providing information to live-in caregivers as soon as they arrive, through their employer, through the recruiter, about the types of rights they have so that they know who they can call. We acted quickly as soon as we heard about the many stories of abuse. In this House, we said that we would assemble a professional team at our employment standards office to receive calls through a hotline and address claims for live-in caregivers, help them with information, provide the type of information on their rights that they needed, make the general public more aware of the duties and responsibilities of the employer. Everyone should be aware that these types of abuses, of exploitation, will not be tolerated in the province of Ontario.

Many in our province have the experience of coming to a country as immigrants, as my family came over as immigrants. Many who are in this chamber: Their families have come over as new immigrants, and some are in their second and third and fourth generation. But

when we came over here, we understood that there would be challenges. You come from a warm climate that speaks a different language from English or French and has maybe different laws and does things differently. You arrive here and you assimilate and you become part of Canada, part of Ontario, part of the greater Toronto area. You may go through some difficulties. I know, from my family coming from a country like Portugal, where it's quite warm, and arriving in February—if you don't have a coat on, it's going to be a rude awakening.

But it's a lovely country. It has given so much hope and opportunity to so many. Our diversity is our strength, and when it comes to those coming through the temporary foreign worker program and specifically the live-in caregiver program, yes, they will go through many of those challenges that we've all gone through, but what they should not go through is to be exploited, taken advantage of, duped by somebody who has sold them a bill of goods that is not correct and to have, in many instances, lost their life savings. This is completely unfair.

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It is not what we've built this country and this province on. The values of fairness, of working together, of supporting each other, those are the values that these live-in caregivers coming from wherever have heard about this great country of Canada. We must support them when they're here.

This legislation would correct many serious injustices. It will help protect some of the most vulnerable in our province. It demonstrates our compassion for those who show compassion in their work and their everyday lives, caring for others by caring for all of our loved ones. I again want to thank all of those who gave input into the creation of this very important piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Brampton West.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I'm happy to address the Legislature on second reading of the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others), 2009. As the Minister of Labour has just said, this bill is about recognition of the dignity and worth of some of the most vulnerable employees in our province: foreign nationals who are live-in caregivers.

This past summer, during consultations held in preparation for this bill, I heard heartbreaking stories. I heard accounts of exploitation and abuse many of these employees faced. As caregivers and their advocates came forward and shared personal stories and accounts of situations faced by friends and relatives, an all-too-common scenario emerged.

Under the federal live-in caregiver program, a nanny will come to Ontario to work for a specific person named in the employment offer and the work permit. Typically, the nanny has no or little contact with the employer. Her only contact is the recruiter. The recruiter supposedly assists the nanny in navigating the immigration and work permit process, and for this service the recruiter charges the nanny several thousand dollars in fees. We heard

accounts of live-in caregivers being charged between \$10,000 and \$20,000 in fees. These fees were in addition to all other costs of moving to Canada: the cost of the medical exam, the visa and the airplane ticket.

When the nanny arrives in Ontario, she is supposedly released. That neutral term refers to the practice of setting the nanny adrift in a foreign land. She is told that her employer does not want to hire her anymore. In many of these cases employer never really existed or was never interested in hiring a nanny.

Once the nanny is released, she is an easy target for the unscrupulous recruiter. The nanny often cannot afford to go back home. She has no job and no prospect of getting one, either. She is at the mercy of this recruiter. She can't work legally until she has a new work permit that names a new employer. An alternative scenario is that the nanny does go to work for the employer, but the situation doesn't work out. Either way the nanny needs a new permit, and it can take months to get a new permit.

Until she gets a new work permit, a nanny will often be forced to work in violation of the terms of this program. Once she does that, she will often be told that she is now here illegally and must do whatever her employer tells her to do for whatever wage her employer decides to give her. If she protests to that employer and asserts her rights, she is threatened with deportation. Sometimes her passport is taken from her to hinder any attempt to escape from this miserable situation.

Our legislation is about stopping these unscrupulous recruiters and the victimization of these vulnerable workers. That is why we have provided for a complete ban on fees, a prohibition on withholding passports and personal documents, strong enforcement and stiff penalties. I invite all in the House to support this bill and thereby support the foreign live-in caregivers who are in desperate need of our help.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to an opportunity to respond to both the minister's and the parliamentary assistant's comments on this legislation. I want to say up front that I support the legislation.

People are wondering why I was heckling, I was heckling because, in my view, part of the reason this bill is here is to extricate Liberals from the problems they had with Ruby Dhalla.

Ruby Dhalla is a federal Member of Parliament who decided—rightly so—that she wanted to have a nanny, and there's nothing wrong with that; it's a function of the lives people lead that leads them to that decision. As we remember, sometime last year, Ms. Dhalla was in a situation where she had a couple of caregivers in her employ. She had taken their passports away, she was getting them to work in the family business—there were all kinds of abuses as a result of the actions taken by Ms. Dhalla on those two particular individuals who worked for her.

I want to say up front that I support the bill. I think it's a good idea. Does the bill go far enough, Madam Speaker? I know that when you get a chance to speak, I'll

hear more on this. But I'll say that the bill should be toughened up in order to make sure we toughen some of the provisions. But the point I was making is that the government, in this case, is introducing this bill for good reason, because protection is needed for workers who come into this country to care for our children, and there needs to be legislation to protect them. I support that. I think that's a good idea. But let's not kid ourselves: This government has introduced this bill and talked about doing this bill at a time when there is a member of the federal Liberal caucus who is in trouble as a result of taking advantage of foreign caregivers who were in her employ.

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a second.

The member for Mississauga—Streetsville on a point of order.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Standing order 23(h) specifically forbids making "allegations against another member," and standing order 23(g) prohibits comment on any matter that may be the subject of a proceeding, which I believe the matter referred to by the member for Timmins—James Bay is. He's welcome to comment on the bill but not to contravene the standing orders.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): My understanding of that standing order is that it refers to a member of this House—I'm looking for any further direction from the Clerk. Thank you very much for sharing, member from Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Again, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville makes a point for me: It was a matter before the federal House of Commons—it was a federal Liberal member who got herself in trouble—and I'm commenting that this government, this Liberal government provincially, decided to introduce this legislation in the wake of what happened—I would just remind that the clock is not running; I wouldn't want to take anybody else's time.

Anyway, they were in a situation where they were trying to do some damage control on the Liberal brand, and that's why this particular bill has come forward. Is it a good idea? Absolutely. Will I vote for it? Absolutely. I think it's the right thing to do, but it needs to be toughened up. But let's remember why that bill is coming forward.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Timmins—James Bay may be totally shocked and surprised that I don't subscribe to that reason and rationale for the bill being introduced, except to say that there are many, many people who have indeed been taking advantage of the people we are trying to protect in this piece of legislation. On that we do concur. In terms of the branding situation, I think this is a long-standing understanding.

I want to thank the parliamentary assistant. He has done some honest-to-goodness consultations straight inside not just the Filipino community; many communities

have given him some input right from the grassroots. That is the part that I believe has been instrumental in making sure that people understand that this particular stream we're dealing with is an extremely serious problem, particularly for those who were intimidated in many ways: first of all in leaving their homeland, and secondly, by the unscrupulous people who existed and knew they would do anything to be here.

Having said that, I thank the government, the Minister of Labour and the parliamentary assistant for bringing forward this issue—it takes time for us to remove the onion skin over and over again. I will quite frankly wait to see if there's absolutely anybody in this House who will stand and say this is not the right direction to go for this government to deal with this particular issue.

1400

As I've said many times in this House, and the member from Timmins—James Bay knows, my philosophy about this is that this is a fluid activity in this place. We don't be-all and end-all with one piece of legislation. I look forward to the continuation of improvements for the people who are coming to the country under the impression that there aren't these people on the sidelines ready to rip them off before they even get a chance to make enough money to sustain their families.

I thank the government and I thank the parliamentary assistant, particularly for his grassroots work.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: One of the problems that the opposition is having with regard to the government calling their legislation is that they change constantly. As I understand it, this wasn't put on the agenda until this morning, and therefore our caucus has not had an opportunity to meet, talk about the issues and formulate our position. This is second reading debate, and therefore, for the debate to be meaningful, there should be an opportunity for the caucuses to meet and talk about the principles in the bill.

I want to say that when I was a government House leader for three years, from 1996 to 1999, I ensured that every bill that was to be debated in this House was caucused not only by my caucus, the government caucus, but by the opposition caucuses. I would say to the opposition House leaders, "Please have your caucus review bills X, Y and Z because we may be calling them for debate in the next little while." Under the old rules, before this government made closure much easier, that meant at least three days of second reading debate before closure could be brought forward. Now it can be brought forward in six measly hours.

But notwithstanding that, this government is in total confusion. They don't know what they're going to debate next. It's off the cuff. This was introduced for first reading last week and the caucuses haven't had the opportunity to discuss it, formulate their positions and become knowledgeable on the issues. Therefore, this government is not only out of control financially but out of control legislatively as well.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I very much appreciate the opportunity.

I remember the member from Brant speaking about the individuals being ripped off and the concern about what's taking place there, but in the media we all too often hear about those individuals who were ripped off coming to Ontario or to Canada in the first place.

Some of the aspects: I know individuals who hire predominantly Filipinos who are coming to work in specific areas. One of the areas of concern that has been expressed that I've heard about is that when they come over, there's an understanding, at least when they're coming across, that it's the paying of their dues to work in their discipline for a short period of time. Then, once they're in Ontario for over a year, they get jobs in other areas. So he's constantly getting individuals because he has a very heavily disabled son whom these individuals come over and assist with on a regular basis and take care of. I've met with them and spoken with them; they're very happy with everything they do. However, it's on a short-term basis. So they come to Ontario, they work for about a year and then they migrate through the rest of the system.

I'm just wondering if there's any documentation to follow the individuals on how long they're in Ontario and how long they remain in those disciplines that they come to Ontario for. That's one of the areas of concern that we'd like expressed in some of the debate and hearings on this particular area, as to how long those individuals are there and how well they're taken care of, not only before they came here and what the expectation was when they arrive in Ontario and while they are here, but also afterwards. How long do they remain in those various disciplines?

I appreciate the opportunity, and I look forward to our caucus getting together and talking about this, probably tomorrow.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Brampton West has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Vic Dhillon: I want to thank the member from Timmins—James Bay, the member from Brant and the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills for their remarks.

As the minister stated and I stated before, I had a chance to do some consultations over the summer on this issue. There were presentations made from a wide array of people from different communities and different ethnic backgrounds. As I stated before, the theme was all too apparent and all too often the same. The most appropriate word to describe what people were saying was just "heartbreaking," what these people had to go through. Oftentimes the amount of money that they have to pay is in the range of \$10,000 to \$20,000 or even more. These people do not have the money and often have to take out loans with stiff interest payments, and this amount snowballs to a very, very large amount.

These people have families back home who are dependent on them for support. Oftentimes they come here in the hopes of working and find out that they can't work, that they won't be given the work they were promised, and, yes, they end up doing whatever they have to. This is something that we're trying to change in this bill by way of a complete ban on fees, a prohibition on employers from withholding documents such as passports, and strong enforcement of these rules with real backup with real staff to make sure these rules are effective.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I was just nearly brought to tears as I was listening to the minister's introduction of this bill. As he spoke, he stated that this Liberal administration would not tolerate abuses and exploitation. This, of course, is coming from a government who have abused their authority with taxpayers, have exploited taxpayers with their multitude of scandals and abuses on spending, and who have tried to dupe the people of Ontario into thinking that a billion-dollar scandal is not worth something to them. I guess there were new some drama classes in the Liberal caucus last week or whatnot, but any reasonable person would see through that façade.

I welcome the opportunity to speak to the House on Bill 210. I spoke to it at first reading last week. As the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills said, we have not had time to caucus this bill. Because of the total state of confusion and chaos of this Liberal administration changing their bills, changing their patterns in debates, nobody knows what they're going to do next, not even themselves. But we did have first reading last Wednesday, and now we're into second reading.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We used to know everything because of time allocation.

Mr. Randy Hillier: That's right. But I do maintain that this bill is valuable and it is necessary. As representatives of the people of Ontario, we have an obligation to represent people—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Randy Hillier: We'll see if we can get some of the heckling down here.

We do have an obligation to protect the people of this province who cannot protect themselves. This bill is a good example of legislation that recognizes our responsibilities as representatives. So I once again applaud the government's attempt to protect foreign live-in caregivers who are not or may not be aware of their freedoms and their rights and responsibilities in this country.

That being said, though—and I think it's important to make this point—this bill is there to protect the rights and freedoms and justice for those foreign live-in care workers, but then, within this very piece of legislation, the government chooses to abandon those very same rights and freedoms and to trample the rights and freedoms of employers in this bill. We all know that you

cannot create justice when you provide for freedoms and justice for one group, but harm another group by doing so.

Let me just read this. Subsection 34(1) says, "An employment standards officer may, without a warrant, enter and inspect any place in order to investigate a possible contravention of this act or to perform an inspection to ensure that this act is being complied with."

1410

Why do we have to completely dismiss that long-held tradition, that long-held principle of common law that we are afforded? Our Constitution and our common law provide for protection of people within their homes. We have processes to ensure that government can still ensure that wrongdoing is not happening under the issuance and exercising of warrants. Why is it that now this Liberal administration decides we are going to dismiss 800 years of common law and provide for warrantless entry?

There is another section in the bill, a revision to the Employment Standards Act, section 92, that says that the employment officer may enter these residences to determine whether the employer of an employee who resides in this employer's residence is complying with this act. There's no need to even have the thought or reasonable or probable grounds that there is a contravention of the act. They can just enter anybody's home to see if they are in compliance with this act. That is a far, far stretch.

I realize that we do need to protect foreign live-in caregivers from the likes of Ruby Dhalla and other Liberal members. However we cannot—we cannot—dismiss 800 years of Constitution and common law protection because of one Ruby Dhalla in our midst. There may be a few others out there, but we cannot denigrate and dismiss our Constitution because of one individual.

I'd like to go on. This revision to the employment standards in this bill, although necessary and valuable, will be challenged. It is a violation of our Constitution. We must remember that employment standards officers are not a law unto themselves. For all people in this province, there is an expectation of checks and balances. There are no checks and balances under section 34. This government has given them the ability to breach all our property rights, all our privacy conventions and all elements of the rule of law. This section violates our Constitution.

Just as we want to prevent those one-in-a-thousands such as Ruby Dhalla, we cannot break the law ourselves in this House. Everybody here in this House who votes in favour of this section is choosing to violate our constitutional protections.

This isn't the first time. We've seen that this government, through its history, clearly has little regard for property rights. We've seen it on a multitude of occasions where they have brought in this ever-increasing ability for warrantless entry. We've seen it even with the Green Energy Act. We've seen it with the Clean Water Act, and now also in this new bill, the Animal Health Act, there are provisions for warrantless entry.

What is going on in the minds of this Liberal administration? Do you believe that the only way we can

have justice is if we dismiss all our constitutional protections? Are you guys completely ignorant of our history?

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I ask the member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. Randy Hillier: I withdraw.

Are you completely without knowledge of our history? I would have loved to see an employment standards officer bring to justice those who abuse live-in caregivers, including the federal Liberal member Ruby. Yet this provision, this section 34, is not about justice; it's about the government's attack on our constitutionally protected rights. It's a poison pill in an otherwise good bill, and I need to know: Why is it that this Liberal administration finds it necessary to add a poison pill to what otherwise would be good legislation? Why is it that you believe that you must poison a good document in order to pass it? Is it to shine yourselves in some light that we're unaware of? Is it to put others in a bad light? What is the purpose of this poison pill and this flagrant violation of our Constitution?

Let me be absolutely clear: Were the government to remove this provision and reintroduce this bill with an amended section 34 that does indeed protect the rule of law and justice and our Constitution, I would be willing to move for quick passage of this bill immediately. I'm sure that my NDP colleagues would agree that this legislation is indeed necessary and that they would support quick and timely passage as well, but we're going to leave it up to the minister and—I do hope and expect—to the public to decide. Does this minister want to shove poison pills down our throats and punish those employers who do employ live-in caregivers, or does he want to pass good, sound, constitutionally respectful legislation that will actually help the people of this province? If he chooses the latter, I'm ready to pass this legislation. I'm ready to go to caucus to advocate for it, without any more political gains and without any more of your poison pills.

In two years now of seeing the proceedings in this House, it's becoming more and more clear that nobody on the other side is watching the shop. Nobody is overseeing and looking at the legislation. Nobody has, apparently, any interest in protecting their constitutional responsibilities. It's just as if a piece of legislation fell off the tree and we're going to introduce it today, whatever piece of legislation fell off whatever tree, whatever political wind was blowing out there that blew some paperwork onto the House leader's desk and changed the proceedings of the House for the week.

I realize that there are difficult times for the Liberal administration. I recognize that the \$1-billion scandals and the OLG and the WSIB could take the best of people off guard—and not understand what to do next as scandals are dropping all around them. However, they do have a duty to be sensible, to be reasonable and to uphold our Constitution as well. You cannot, as I said earlier, protect the rights and freedoms of one by diminishing the rights and freedoms of another. That ought to be clear to every legislator in this House. It ought to be clear to

everyone in the Liberal administration that what you have done here is incomplete, it's flawed, but the concept is good. Get yourselves back on track; pick yourselves up; dust yourselves off. Forget about the scandals for a moment or two and how you're going to run away from them, start thinking about bringing in good legislation, and maybe the scandals will stop brewing so often over on the other side.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I always enjoy following up on my good friend Mr. Hillier. I forget the name of the riding: Renfrew—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Lanark.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Lanark-Renfrew; there we go.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Frontenac.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Frontenac, Lanark, whatever. I would never be the Speaker of this House because I've been here for 20 years and everybody's riding is something that still eludes me.

There are two things in his presentation that I want to speak to. The first part is the assertion that this is the Ruby Dhalla bill—and I agree with him. I believe that the government, quite frankly, brought this bill forward—why? Because they were doing damage control on the part of a federal Liberal scandal of a federal member, Ruby Dhalla, who abused her nannies. She had taken their passports away and she had asked them—or not asked them, she told them they had to go work in the family business for free, and really was taking advantage of workers who should not be taken advantage of.

Now, is this legislation that's needed? Absolutely. Is this legislation that needs to be passed? Absolutely. There's no question about that. But I agree with him: That's the reason this bill came forward.

The part, I think, where I have a bit of a disconnect with my good friend is on the issue of searches without a warrant. I appreciate this because he puts himself out as the property rights guy here in the Legislature, and rightfully so. That's one of his passions. He says that under this bill, a Ministry of Labour inspector will be able to enter the premises in order to inspect to see if the person is actually being taking advantage of. Now, that's an interesting debate, because the fact is—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Well, there are two sides to this. The member makes a point, and that is, should somebody have the right to enter my house if it happens to be a place of employment? That's where I think it gets kind of tricky. It is my private house but it's also a place of employment. I think there is an interesting line there, and I think that's something that we have to talk about at committee.

This power, as you know, exists in the Ministry of Labour when it comes to entering the premises of an employer to inspect a workplace for unsafe work. That is something that we already give as a right in the legislation in order to allow inspectors to be able to enter the

premise of an employer. But that of a house? I think that will be interesting.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The Minister of Tourism and the government House leader, among other things.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Among other things, the member for Nipissing—a proud member for Nipissing.

I am pleased to have an opportunity to speak for a couple of moments on Bill 210. I would like to set the record straight on some of the comments that were made by the member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills and the member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, who clearly have not had a discussion with their House leader. Again, the disarray that is in the opposition party shines through as they have no idea what schedule has been set for this House. In fact, this piece of legislation was discussed in our House leaders' meeting last week and we did schedule it for discussion today in the House.

I'm very pleased to be able to rise in support of Bill 210. I know that the member for Parkdale–High Park will also be joining in the debate, and in fact that it's you, Mr. Speaker, who have accommodated her schedule to allow her to have that discussion today, because we did know that this bill was up for discussion today.

It is an important piece of legislation, and I'm sorry that the members for Carleton–Mississippi Mills and Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington have trivialized it with a discussion on a certain aspect of the bill while not looking at the safety and security of our foreign caregivers, which is fundamentally the important part of this bill—and the bill that we as a government feel is important to protect those vulnerable workers who are entering our country and are not being protected.

For a variety of reasons, be it the inadequacy of the federal legislation and loopholes that have existed, we have found that these foreign caregivers need our protection. It was an issue that was raised here in this House and we are happy to be moving forward with this legislation, which we introduced last week, which the minister was here to introduce, which was discussed in our House leaders' meeting, and which was clear for all of the parties was going to be discussed today.

I believe the member for Whitby–Oshawa will also be speaking to this issue and was prepared, as I saw her enter into the chamber today with her notes. So she had fair warning of our discussion today.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm sorry that the government House leader has trivialized this important legislation, because the government introduced this last Tuesday, when we all have our caucus meetings. On Wednesday, the critic was given a briefing and the House leaders had their meeting, and it was read off that the government was going to call this bill today. But Tuesday comes after the time when we had an opportunity to deal with it in our caucus.

I don't like the government bringing legislation here and not allowing members to inform themselves of the

pros and cons of the pieces of legislation, and having to rely on our critic to carry the full load. I think the critic should have, and I know the critic believes there should be, a full caucus discussion about the positioning of a party. I trust his judgment with regard to legislation, but I don't think this is a fair and proper process showing that the government really believes this is an important piece of legislation. I believe it's an important piece of legislation and I know our critic does.

I'd also like to talk about the member for Timmins–James Bay, who talked about the entry issue. He was careful to avoid our critic's major objection to the entry provision in this bill. The entry provision, as I understand it from our critic, is that an officer can go into a home without warrant, and when you have it without warrant you allow the complete discretion to be given to the enforcement officer to make that judgment. All that is necessary and is—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member from Parkdale–High Park.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Mr. Speaker, thank you for making it possible for me to speak to this bill, so thank you for filling in for me in the chair.

I don't want to get involved in the discussion about whether we should be debating this on such short notice or not. I'd like to talk about the content of the bill, G210. Needless to say, as my friend from Timmins–James Bay said already, we will be supporting this bill. Our question is how to make this bill stronger, and that's what I'm going to be addressing in a short while.

I wanted to speak to the comments, however, from the members from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington and Carleton–Mississippi Mills, particularly about warrantless entry. I want to also uphold what my colleague from Timmins–James Bay said on this score: I think it's extremely important to recognize that the home is a place of employment for these women. It's not just a private home anymore. As soon as you bring in a foreign caregiver and employ her or him in your home, you become a de facto place of employment and therefore subject to the employment standards and to inspection by an employment standards officer. I think that's most important, because what we're dealing with here is a very vulnerable population, as vulnerable in some ways—and I think of the CAS example, who also can rush in to save a child. They need to be looked after, and that's what this legislation purports to do and proposes to move forward on. So you need that entry. You need it—unfortunately, I know. I don't believe that this is a strike at the Constitution. I believe that it is an inspection of a place of employment and therefore entirely within the purview of employment standards and the act itself.

I'll save any further comments for my hour lead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's clear that if government was left up to the ideologues on the left, there would be no privacy and no justice at all in our country—but it might

be utopia. I have a slightly different view. There is an old adage that a man's home is his castle. That was from King Alfred the Great, who would not enter into a subject's home without his consent.

There have been some suggestions or arguments that because somebody may be employing somebody, their home is no longer their home. Well, we have at the present time many people who work in other people's homes, all kinds of home-based businesses where other people are working in their homes, but it still remains the person's home and there still are safeguards. But now we're suggesting that if they're a foreign live-in caregiver, then that position trumps our 800 years of history.

1430

I want to have a lot of regard and a lot of respect for foreign live-in workers; however, we have to respect our Constitution as well. If we open up these doors—and we are opening up these doors, because this legislation also allows for fishing expeditions. It doesn't have to be somebody who does have a foreign live-in worker working there. The employment standards officer can go into any home to see if there is a foreign live-in caregiver working there.

Fishing expeditions are not the way to craft legislation—thoughtful, sensible discussion.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It was interesting. Just to follow up before I begin on what I wanted to say on the warrantless entry issue—and I don't want to spend too much time on it, because I hope that this bill will go to committee and that the amendments will be brought forward and we can discuss it there.

The member does make a good point about possible fishing expeditions. We do have to correct any legislation to make sure that that's not possible. However, I still go back to my point that it is a place of employment, especially if you have somebody living there completely under the control, in a sense, of the person whose house it is.

There's a background to this bill, and that's where I want to start. The background is really the position of precarious immigrant labour in this province. It's precarious, needless to say, and it's abused and it's exploited. It doesn't stop with live-in caregivers; it continues right across the board with those who are here on temporary visas, those who are here illegally or working in the construction trade.

We have a problem in this province. We have a problem in many ways. First of all, about 37% of all jobs now are temporary, part-time or contract. When I put forward my employment standards act, a bill that was defeated—not even debated by this government—one of the things that I wanted to look at was the very definition of what an employee is. Part of the problem that foreign caregivers have is that really, through much of the experience of live-in nannies, maids, housekeepers—and drivers, in the old days—they were not considered employees in the same way as, say, an employee in a

factory, an employee in an office or an employee somewhere else. They were considered a breed apart. In fact, they still are, despite government Bill 210, because they still don't have the right, for example, to unionize. One of the things that we would like to see added to this bill to make it much stronger is that we would like to see the ability of foreign caregivers, foreign workers in the home, to unionize just like anybody else. In fact, Pura Velasco and her organization of caregivers would be the perfect place to start.

This is not a wild suggestion. I know that the Steelworkers and others have been working with live-in caregivers to try to steer them in that direction. Although we're pleased that the government has brought in G210, it's a step forward—although Her Majesty's loyal opposition are right in the sense that this would not protect Ruby Dhalla's two women, would still do nothing to protect them, and I will talk about why that is in a moment. Despite the fact that it's a step forward, it really is at the benevolence of the government that it's a step forward. It's not at the behest of the workers except so far as they've pushed this government to act. The protection, the safeguards, the safety of unionization is that workers themselves then organize and then deal with employers.

It was said to me in the briefing we had with government staff that there's one employee and one employer, so it's not a typical unionized environment or an environment that could be unionized easily. But in fact we've seen, from the actions of the nannies through the caregivers' associations and through, as the Minister of Labour himself admitted—the fact that nannies talk and nannies get together. Most nannies, I would warrant, probably come from similar countries and places, predominantly the Philippines in this province. They talk; they meet; they organize. It's their organization and their hard work and their letters and their petitioning of this government that has resulted in G210. So think how much stronger their position would be as still-vulnerable workers if they had a union to represent them.

I don't really buy the argument that because of their special status, they should not have the right to unionize. I think, like my friend from Lanark-Frontenac-Lennox and Addington, that the right to unionize is a critical and deserved right of all workers in the province of Ontario. It isn't right now, but it should be. That right should be paramount, and that would certainly add to this bill, make it stronger. So that's something that you can bet we're going to bring forward in the New Democratic Party as an amendment to this bill. So there's that.

What else in sort of broad strokes do we see as problematic in the bill as it stands?

The other problem with the bill as it stands vis-à-vis the workers who worked for Ruby Dhalla and the scandal that ensued, these poor women working 16 hours a day, certainly making less than minimum wage, which is a nanny's right to earn, by the way, who didn't get vacation pay, worked for the family business, did everything from shining shoes to washing floors of a chiropractic office,

and had their passports withheld—certainly these two women would not be helped by this bill insofar as they began their working life with Ruby Dhalla in the Dhalla residence. Why is that?

What this bill would help with, of course, was any fees that were charged to them for getting their jobs in the first place. It would eliminate those. That's a good thing. We support that. It needs to be stronger even in that regard, and I'll talk about it in a minute. But it stops at the door, so to speak. It stops at the door, because when the nanny begins to work for her employer and employment standards start to cover her rather than Bill 210, the question is, what happens if there's an abuse? Clearly there were abuses in the Dhalla household. Clearly there are abuses in a number of households across the province with live-in caregivers.

What would that live-in caregiver do? Her right under employment standards is to complain, but think about it. Here's where the vulnerability aspect really comes into play. Think about being the only employee in a household who then tries to complain about something that the employer is doing. Surely, no matter what follows from that complaint, whether it's a visit from the employment standards officer, whether it's a visit from the police or a visit from some other government body, they are going to know who made the complaint. Not only are they going to know who made the complaint, but that person has to continue to work there. Because of federal regulations, if that live-in caregiver leaves her place of employment within two years of arriving in this country—and this is, I know, not provincial but federal—and goes to another employer, she jeopardizes her immigration status.

So picture this poor, vulnerable worker who has a legitimate complaint about broken employment standards in the house, abuse, all sorts of problems. By even making the complaint, she jeopardizes her immigration status. By even making the complaint—even if she didn't jeopardize her immigration status and the feds do something about that, which they should—she's still incredibly vulnerable. Whether the employment standards office levies a fine against her employer or even if the employment standards puts her employer in jail, which there are no provisions for right now for employment standards violations in the home, even if they do that, she still has to work there for up to two years. She still has to work there.

Imagine working in an environment where you're looking after somebody's children and you've just levied a complaint against your employer. Imagine what that feels like. And imagine then, if you will, that not only are you going to have to put yourself in that position, but you don't speak the language particularly well. You know you have to carry this weight on your own shoulders. You have relatives back in the Philippines or wherever whom you are looking after and who are dependent on you.

And then, Mr. Speaker, I ask you, how many women are actually going to complain? The answer, of course, is virtually none until they leave their employ. That is why

this bill needs to be strengthened in terms of the length of time, because I don't assume that any of these women will complain during the first two years that they are stuck there under current federal laws. I think what's probably much more likely to happen is what happened in the Ruby Dhalla case, that after they leave their employment, after the two years, when they are freer to go and seek employment wherever, then they will start to complain—when they catch a breath of fresh air, when they understand their rights better and, more to the point, when their immigration status is not going to be challenged.

That's when the complaint is going to be made, and guess what? Under employment standards legislation they only have six to 12 months to lodge a complaint. So that falls well within that first two-year period. They're not going to do it. So we need to extend the time of complaint, the complaint-making process, just as G210 does for the fees charged, to the actual complaints made under employment standards. We'd like to see that amendment in this bill because that would actually go much farther to protect live-in nannies than this bill does right now, which only attacks the unscrupulous, exploitative recruiters at the time of employment.

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Speaking about unscrupulous, exploitative employers at the time of employment: Guess what's going to happen after this bill is passed? You can bet on it. I'll take your bets—any party; I'll take your bets. These same unscrupulous, exploitative recruiters are going to stop recruiting in Ontario because G210 will be in force and they're going to start going to the place of origin and recruiting nannies in the Philippines, in Jamaica, in these foreign places where the law of Ontario does not apply. And they're going to be charging them fees before they get on the plane, before they get on the boat, before they even begin to come to this country. That's what's going to happen. We know it. The government knows it. The researchers on the government side know it. They know that this is what's going to happen.

Another amendment needs to be in this bill, and that is that it has to be extremely clear that, within that 42-month framework that they have to complain in—that takes them well beyond, and safely beyond, I might add, the two-year period—that has to apply to all fees paid wherever they are paid, whether it's in our jurisdiction or outside our jurisdiction. There you've got a bit of a fight on your hands, but it's a fight worth having. Please, let's put that amendment into this. If it's a recruiter who is based in Ontario, even if they're charging the fee in the Philippines or Jamaica or anywhere else, they should still be liable to have to give that fee back to the live-in caregiver who paid it within 42 months, if she complains and demands it back, even if she didn't pay that fee here in Ontario. So that's a critical piece, and we want to make sure that that's really airtight because otherwise this is going to be a waste of everyone's time; we know it and the government knows it.

Interestingly enough, in terms of precarious employment, nannies sit pretty well where a lot of immigrant

women sit right now in Ontario. So you don't have to come to Ontario to work as a live-in caregiver to be exploited and abused; oh, no. In fact, most women of colour, immigrant women, who show up in the statistics, show up as women who are exploited one way or the other for one thing—and this is an interesting sidebar: We should be paying equal pay for equal work, and we don't, in the province of Ontario. One of the things my employment standards amendment hoped to correct was exactly that.

"In the European Union"—and I'm quoting here from an OPSEU publication—"they have banned discrimination against part-time and temporary workers for over a decade," because the other way of protecting women, particularly immigrant women who are in precarious employment, whether as caregivers or not, is by making sure that if they only work part-time, they're paid the same hourly rate as a full-time employee. This shouldn't be just for them, by the way; it should be for all workers in Ontario. Where is the ethical justification that if you do exactly the same job as somebody else, you should earn sometimes half as much, only because you're on a contract, you're doing it temporarily or you're doing it part-time? Yet that's the case. It's not the case in the European Union now; it's not the case in the UK. It was actually some of the UK changes to their labour standards and employment standards acts on which I structured my own bill. So that's something we need to do.

The other thing we need to do to protect them and all precariously employed immigrant women more is, we need to define what an employee is. If you look at, for example, many of the immigrant men who come to Ontario and work as cleaners—that's a very standard entry job. My friend across, the Minister of Labour, is Portuguese. He will know that—since my husband is Portuguese, I know this for a fact; it's almost a sad joke—that the Portuguese couple comes over, the woman works as a cleaner or a caregiver and the man works in construction or cleaning. Those are their options. You'll find a predominance of Portuguese people in those professions.

Portuguese cleaners in office buildings are called contractors. They're not called employees; they're called contractors. Under that title, they have to provide their own tools and their own cleansing and cleaner products, and they have to look after their own books and submissions to the government. Guess what they don't get? Benefits. Because if you've got your own business and you're contracting out to somebody else, then that somebody else isn't responsible for paying your benefits.

This goes on all over Ontario. It's something we brought to light to this government many times. In fact, these are cleaners in government buildings. This is what's happening under contract in government buildings around this building. This is a blight on Ontario. It's a shame for Ontario, and it's because employment standards has missed an obvious chance that G210 might help correct; that is, to define what an employee is. Again, I come back to the fact that live-in caregivers who

were from other countries were not considered employees in the traditional sense until just recently, and even now we're fighting to get them the protection of traditional employees.

Under that larger umbrella, as it were, you've got all sorts of abuses. For example, what is to stop an employer who has a live-in caregiver from calling her a contractor, saying, "She's a contractor; she's selling caregiving services; she's got her own business somewhere," and showing her how to set up her own business, and not paying her benefits, not paying her overtime, and making her supply her own supplies etc.? There are a thousand ways, under the current writing of the employment standards, to get around the employment standards and get around G210.

So G210 sits in a world of employment standards abuses. That's what it does. If the minister spent any time talking to Deena Ladd and Mary Gellatly from Workers' Action—and I know he did—or looking at any of the stories that come through Workers' Action, he would hear stories of flat out unpaid wages; people who worked for weeks at a time and didn't get paid. The employer says, "Too bad, so sad, don't have the money, can't afford to pay you." Then it's incumbent on the person who hasn't been paid to go and complain about it. I mean, please. Particularly for our immigrant population, they're not going to spend the time necessary to complain to employment standards, who, by the way, would probably put them on hold and put them on the bottom of the list of complaints anyway, because that's been our experience of employment standards.

Less than 1% of all workplaces in Ontario ever get a visit from an employment standards officer, and guess what: We've just added to that workload every home that has a live-in caregiver, so I imagine it's going to drop to at least 0.05%. Their chances of ever getting inspected are virtually nil.

Employers know that someone who doesn't know their rights or feel particularly confident in asserting their rights—or in the language—is not going to waste the precious time they have to work to feed their families, to go and complain to some government bureaucracy to investigate for them. For what? They move on very quickly and get another job, hopefully—and they really are doing this prayerfully and hopefully—one where someone will actually pay them for the work they do. Again, our employment standards are woefully and inadequately resourced and woefully and inadequately enforced. That is the experience of workers right now who are considered workers, even those who have rights that live-in caregivers don't have up until this point.

We came across all this information when we talked about Bill 139 and temporary agencies. We talked about it all then, and we're still talking about it. And do you know what? I would hate to see another term go by when we're still talking about it. Something has to be done, and it has to be done quickly.

I saw a wonderful film, a documentary called *Schmatta*, on the *schmatta* trade in New York City and

how in 1965, 95% of it was labour done by immigrant women. Do you know that in 1965, American clothing was 95% made in America? Guess what the figure is right now? It's 5%. Only 5% of the clothes Americans wear right now are made in the United States. Guess where the rest come from? In a sense, we've exported our poor employment standards overseas. They come from sweatshops abroad, many of them in China, India and Pakistan. That's where those jobs have gone. And the picture is almost identical in Toronto.

1450

I remember when Spadina was the place where all the textiles and clothing were made—gone now, a huge industry just wiped off the face of this country. We're seeing what happened to the shmatte trade happen across the board in manufacturing, across the board in car manufacturing. It's only a matter of time before the first cars roll off the ships coming from China. They'll be cheaper, just like Walmart goods. People need cheaper because people have lost their jobs and the gap between the rich and poor is growing. In the last 20 years, the rich have become richer in this country by about 114%, the middle class have flatlined and dipped a little bit, and the poor have become increasingly poorer. That's the snapshot, and the snapshot is there for a reason. We are not the manufacturers we once were. We don't have the good working-class, middle-class jobs anymore.

This brings me to the backdrop again of G210, this bill that exists to help nannies, the most vulnerable of immigrant workers in our midst right now. Who are the families? Who are the women who are hiring the nannies? We haven't talked about that in this House. Why does a woman go out and hire a foreign caregiver? She has to give her a room, feed her, keep her under her roof to look after her children. Why? Because guess what? There ain't no daycare in Ontario. It's not like Manitoba on one side of us. It's not like Quebec on the other side of us. In Quebec, you can get daycare for \$7 a day. In Manitoba, you can get daycare for \$17 a day. In Ontario, guess what? According to the Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care, it costs between \$40 and \$65 a day, and that's if you can find a space, because there are tens of thousands of children waiting for a space in daycare and there aren't any spaces. One in 10 children is lucky enough to get a daycare space right now in Ontario.

Of course, women need to work. We want to work. We didn't fight all those wars for equal pay and women's liberation for nothing. We want to be able to have a family and work as well, just like men have been doing for centuries, but to do that, women need child care. They need it desperately, and they're not getting it in this province. So if you have two or more children, it makes economic sense to hire a nanny. It's the only way you can afford to go to work.

Here's where the problem starts: If you pay the nanny what you should be paying her, if you pay her minimum wage per hour, if you pay her vacation pay, if you provide her with a place to stay and food to eat, you have to make a pretty penny when you go out in the workforce

to be able to afford to do that with some justice. You can see why families start cheating a little bit around the edges. They're hurting too. So the pain gets passed on: the pain of being a woman working in Ontario who doesn't have child care spaces, who has to hire a nanny because there isn't anybody else to look after her children—and her lack of equal resources. Women still make 71 cents on the dollar to men in this province. If you look around this chamber, you'll see that women are not equally represented in political life.

So, women who still struggle for their equality and still struggle in every workplace they go into—in fact, it's still the law in Ontario that you can fire somebody when she goes on maternity leave. You don't have to hire her back. She can be fired. Everybody should know that who's watching this. If you take maternity leave in Ontario, you've got no guarantees that your job will be held, unless you're in a unionized environment. We talked about the importance and necessity of unions earlier.

So this woman who's going out to work and is being abused at the workplace herself is going to pass on her pain to the live-in nanny who's looking after her children. That's what happens. We all know that's what happens.

We can tinker around the edges, which is what this legislation does—and it's a good tinkering. Trust me, it's better than nothing. It's good that we stop abusive, exploitive recruiters from abusing and exploiting nannies. That's a good thing. They shouldn't be charging nannies fees. In fact, no recruiter should be charging anybody a fee for trying to find work for them. They are paid by the employer, and that's the way it should be. In fact, that's the way it was until Harris got rid of that. And here we are, six years under Liberal rule, and we still don't have it back. So there you go.

The pain gets passed along because there's no child care. The pain gets passed along because there's no enforcement of employment standards. The pain gets passed along because employment standards themselves aren't comprehensive enough to really speak to the reality in which we find ourselves in Ontario, and that's globalization. That's a reality where sweatshops abroad do all the manufacturing and where we're expected to compete with them for zero wages. And, you know, that pain too is exported, because who do we think these women are who are coming to Canada to find work if they are not the people who realize that their options at home aren't great?

Why aren't their options at home in the Philippines or in Jamaica that great? There are lots of American and Canadian companies operating in these places. Why aren't they that great? Because they know that the salaries are so poor they can barely feed their families on them. And imagine this reality, if you might. Imagine that it's actually better to pay \$10,000 to \$20,000 to recruiters in fees to come to Canada, to face possible abuse and alienation and certainly loneliness away from your family, and work as an indentured servant—let's

call it what is—for a family where you have virtually no rights and no right to leave, which, let's face it, is the only right most workers have, the right to say, "I quit." Nannies don't have that in the first two years of their being here because that would jeopardize their immigration status. They come here to work for what is minimum wage at best, if they get paid that. Again, there's a lack of employment standards enforcement.

I mean, how bad must it be at home—that's the question we should be asking ourselves—that that looks good? How bad is it in the Philippines, how awful is it in Jamaica, how horrible is it in all these other countries that they are coming here to be abused and consider this a step up? That's what we should be asking ourselves in Ontario. The answer to that question is where the 250,000 jobs we've lost in this province went and where the sinking economy of this province is also headed. That's the answer.

Again, with Bill 210 we are attacking really a pebble on a huge beach of problems, problems that this government is not attending to, not in any way: problems of child care, problems of women's equality, problems of globalization and how it affects us here at home, the problems of protecting Ontario jobs and Ontario workers, which we're not doing, the problems of protecting our manufacturing base, which we are losing quickly, rapidly. It's almost gone. "The last manufacturer to leave the province, please turn out the lights": We're really there.

Do we really foresee a future on this road, especially now that we've got—wow—the biggest deficit in Canada, especially now that we've got this horrendous debt that future generations are going to have to pay off? This is a pretty grim scenario, but unfortunately this is where that one little puzzle piece of foreign-trained workers, of immigrants, foreign-trained caregivers—that's where that little piece fits.

What do we want to say about this in the New Democratic Party?

First of all, we want to say we're going to support the bill. An inch is better than nothing. But we're in a state of the union in Ontario where, really, we need a mile and we need it fast, because that dying beast called the middle class that we're trying to get the last ounce of taxes out of with the HST—because that's where it's aimed, really, solidly: flat taxes, regressive taxes, aimed at the consumer. We're going to get the last ounce of money we can out of them. Our students are paying the highest student fees in the country, have the highest debt for students in the country. The cost of everything is going up. The middle class is sinking into the poor, the poverty class, pretty quickly; the rich are getting richer. That's always the way. It's always the way when this happens because, you know, they're not necessarily making their money from manufacturing anymore. It's just that great capitalist casino that keeps rolling over the dollars, and the winners cash out. So we've got some people cashing out right now in Ontario. They're fine. They're not concerned.

We in the New Democratic Party are concerned about everybody else—not only nannies, but the middle class who are forced to hire from overseas to do work that, quite frankly, should be given to well-paid workers here. Instead of doing what we've been doing, we should be paying our early childhood educators a living wage and providing daycare across the province.

1500

If we are bringing in women from the Philippines and from developing countries the way we are and abusing them the way we are, then we should pretty well make sure that we've got the employment standards—the chutzpah—to enforce the laws, even as paltry as they are in Ontario. If we don't enforce them, they're not laws at all, and where 1% of the workplaces get inspected, ever, by an employment standards officer, that's pretty pathetic. So now we're going to add all these households—I don't think my friend in the Conservative Party from Lanark—Frontenac—Lennox and Addington has much to worry about, quite frankly, with respect to unwarranted, warrantless entry, because there are no employment standards officers going anywhere anyway.

So here we're going to put the crux of enforcing employment standards on to the backs of the most vulnerable women—barely speak English, away from their homeland, shaky immigration status, existing in a home. They're going to be expected to push employment standards forward and to prosecute their employers? Please. Does anybody believe that's going to happen? Does anybody here actually believe that's going to happen, that this law is actually going to change anything, especially for the Ruby Dhalla nannies—let's talk about that for a minute—especially for those two brave women who spoke up at a meeting with the Minister of Labour and the Minister of Education, who were there, and told them about the egregious quality of life they were experiencing in a Liberal MP's household?

One of my questions is, what's been done about those two women, those two brave women who complained? One of the members here, the member from Mississauga—Streetsville, raised in a point of order when I was sitting in the chair that we're not supposed to speak about court cases. Well, I want to know, is there a court case ongoing? Is there an employment standards case ongoing? Is there an employment standards case ongoing around the Ruby Dhalla case? Are employment standards going to prosecute the Dhalla family for what those nannies experienced? I can tell you the answer; it's a rhetorical question. The answer is probably no. Quite frankly, it's not because of the laxness of employment standards at the Ministry of Labour. It's because the law doesn't cover them anymore. They have six to 12 months—any worker in the province of Ontario has six to 12 months to complain about breaches of the Employment Standards Act.

Think about that in the situation of a nanny. Again, I come back to what is a federal problem but it's our problem too; that is, for the first two years, they cannot change employers without jeopardizing their immigration

status. How vulnerable is that? There are two words for that: It's called indentured servanthood. If you can't quit without being shipped back to where you came from, if you can't complain—because how are you going to do that and keep your job? And then when you finally, after two years, leave your job and you still don't have any rights—because it's two years later and you only had six to 12 months to complain—that's a problem, and it could be fixed. Quite frankly, that problem could be fixed in this bill. We need a very strong amendment to extend 42 months to not only the recruitment fee but also to any breaches under the Employment Standards Act that happened in that home while that nanny was there.

So there's a great deal to do with employment standards. This is a small piece—an important piece, I warrant, but a very small piece—and we want that piece to be bigger. You know, my friends, who the biggest employer in the United States is right now? Manpower temporary. That should send a shiver down everyone's spine, that the largest employer, in one of the largest—I was going to say "in the largest economy in the world"—economies in the world, is a temporary agency. How frightening is that?

We are on their doorstep and our situation is not much different. The gap between wealthy and poor is getting broader, with the middle class being emptied out. Unionization's going down, not up where it should be. What do we need to address that? Simple measures, really, measures this government could and should take, which would then help live-in caregivers as well.

Number one, card-check certification: Allow nannies to unionize by law. They're not allowed to unionize by law right now. We need to get as many workers into unions as possible. That's where their best protection lies.

A minimum wage increase: Hey, if the minimum wage is a dollar below the poverty line, which it will be even next spring, a person is still working in poverty. Want to get people out of poverty? Raise the minimum wage. It's a tax-exempt move. You don't have to pay any tax dollars to do that—and you can do that.

Housing: I won't get into housing; it's a separate issue, but it's something we need to look at. And this dip in the budget for housing is very concerning.

Finally, we have to enforce laws, because if we don't enforce the laws we have—and this goes across any ministry, quite frankly. If we don't enforce the laws we have—including G210, including this law, which we hope passes quickly—if we don't enforce them, they might as well not exist. The onus to enforce employment laws should be on the Ministry of Labour, not on the person being exploited, because it's exactly for the reasons that they're not being enforced that that person is being exploited.

So again, please, see this as a very small step, see it as a necessary step, a necessary piece of a very big puzzle, and even of the very big puzzle of how we are going to save women from the kind of exploitation that took place in the Ruby Dhalla household. As I say again, this leg-

islation would not have helped them. We need to make it stronger so that it would help future victims, in future households like that.

I certainly remain committed to this, and I want to give thanks where thanks is due. To Parkdale legal, a phenomenal organization in my riding—I'm blessed to have them there. Mary Gellatly and Deena Ladd—you've heard their names mentioned many times in this House. Were it not for them, I don't think we would be talking about this, so a great thank you. Thank you to Pura Velasco and her organization of caregivers. Again, without their incredible effort, the effort of whistle-blowers everywhere, we wouldn't be speaking about this bill as it exists right now. Without those two brave souls who came forward, very publicly, and complained about their treatment in the Dhalla household, we wouldn't be talking about this bill. We know that, and thank you to them.

Finally, thank you to all of those workers out there—foreign, immigrant workers—who are being exploited and abused as we speak. If, by some strange reason, they have enough money to afford the channel to watch this on and have nothing better to do with their time than be watching this right now, let me say, please—even though the system is not your friend, even though the system is not working on your behalf—please complain. Please do what these brave women have done. Please step forward, because that's the only way we're going to make a difference in the lives of the women who we're mainly concerned about—and they are mainly women.

So for the future of this province, we need to do the groundwork: We need to strengthen employment standards and we need to enforce employment standards. We need to make sure that we grow a middle class again—the middle class we're killing—and we need to do that by all sorts of means, of which this is a very, very small part. We need to win back those 250,000 good jobs that we've lost. We need to build our manufacturing base so that we're not shipping all our work overseas to sweatshops there and just transferring our employment standards problems out of here to over there. We need to look after our folks in Ontario.

You know, when my husband and I were in Sweden—and I know the member from Eglinton—Lawrence loves it when I talked about Sweden, so I'm not going to let this go by without it. Let me tell you, in a community of nine million people—we have almost 13 million in Ontario—every third or fourth person you see in Sweden drives a Volvo. Guess why? It's in their economic interest to do so, and the government invests in research and design dollars. It's a place with free—yes, you heard me right—free post-secondary; free—yes, you heard me right—free daycare; yes, free pharmacare. Where do they get the money from? They get the money from an incredible effort in terms of building up their manufacturing base, in part, and also by sharing the wealth better—two processes the Swedes do extremely well. That's why we know the names of their companies over here. Who has shopped at IKEA lately? Nine million. Where are the Ontario IKEAs? Where are the Ontario Volvos? Where

are the Ontario H&Ms? Where are the Ontario free tuition packages, free daycare packages? Where's the Ontario open, able access to long-term care? Where is that?

1510

So, within that great sphere, getting back to G210 again, will we support it? Yes, we will in the New Democratic Party; it's all we have over here, but boy, oh boy, are we going to work to make it stronger, and boy, oh boy, are we going to continue to do what we as New Democrats always do in this House, and that is to fight for the kind of Ontario where we shouldn't be having this conversation, where there aren't vulnerable people working as indentured servants in homes; an Ontario where every worker actually has some dignity, where every woman has access to daycare, where every immigrant knows and exercises their rights because their rights are enforced. That's the kind of Ontario that we want in the New Democratic Party. We won't settle for anything else; hopefully no one else will either.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I want to thank my honourable colleague from Parkdale–Copenhagen there—I mean, Parkdale–High Park. Anyway, just on a side note, she mentioned how wonderful IKEA is, but I think we should shop at places like Bad Boy. Bad Boy, which is a Canadian, Ontario-based furniture manufacturer, has Canadian furniture manufacturers sell their products on the floor of Bad Boy, which is nice to see. So just a little plug in for Bad Boy there, and IKEA is a fine store too.

I think she has made some good general criticisms and comments about all the work there is to do, and I can't disagree with a lot of her interpretations of how challenging things are, especially for immigrant women and immigrant foreign workers in this province. I'm glad that she supports the thrust of the bill, and I know that she has put forward some pretty valuable recommendations for amendments which I think are good to make this stronger, if possible.

I think she knows full well that this is a very humongous piece of work, trying to enter into this field of protecting foreign workers. We've never done this before in Ontario, so it's going to be quite interesting to undertake this task because it's an area that the Ministry of Labour is taking on. I'm glad they're doing it, and I hope that we can help them in shaping this legislation so that it is effective and does serve a good purpose, because really, if it protects the foreign caregivers, I think it's protecting our own society, and we all have a benefit and better protection in this society. I think that's why it goes beyond just protecting caregivers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to just add a few comments with respect to Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers. I would say, though we haven't had the opportunity to fully caucus this bill, that we certainly recognize the need for this bill.

I do appreciate the comments made by the member from Parkdale–High Park, who I think really commented on the plight that so many caregivers from different countries face when they come to Canada, wondering what kind of place they came to, to be treated as badly as they have been by some people here in Ontario. I have no doubt that that does happen; I have heard some of those stories myself personally.

I know that people are being treated badly, and I can't help but wonder how sad it is that we have to have legislation that we're introducing here in Ontario to require people to be decent to the people that they bring into their homes to take care of their children, to take care of their babies, to take care of their family members with disabilities, to take care of seniors in their households. You expect that kindness from them; why would you not extend to them the same kindness? So I think it's a pretty sad state of affairs that we have to legislate it, but the fact of the matter is that we apparently do.

So I support the intention behind this bill. We do have some concerns with respect to some of the enforcement provisions, particularly with respect to section 34, which allows warrantless entry. I think that we need to be concerned a bit about that, because it is a very significant power, allowing someone to come in to someone's home. I recognize that it is also a place of employment, but I think when you're giving that kind of ability to the employment standards office, you have to have very significant standards around when that can happen. I understand that it's only allowed now for possible contraventions of the act. I would urge the government to take a look at tightening that language up to make sure that it happens only in very exceptional circumstances.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: First of all, I'd like to thank the member from Parkdale–High Park for her impassioned and detailed approach and presentation on this whole issue.

There's no question, Speaker, as you are well aware and as other members of this House are aware, that there are abuses of temporary foreign workers. The Ruby Dhalla case is the one that has gained the greatest publicity. But clearly, when this bill was introduced, we had a number of representatives here in the House who had a long history of fighting for improvements in the lives of those who are temporary foreign workers.

It is clear this bill still has a long way to go in ensuring that temporary foreign workers are treated properly, are not exploited, are given the sorts of natural justice and fair treatment that we would expect from our society. The idea that someone comes from the Philippines or from the Caribbean and has to pay money to get a job in Canada is extraordinary to me, absolutely extraordinary. It can only be seen as an exploitation of those people and the desperate situations that they so often find themselves in.

When the member from Parkdale–High Park talks about the need to address poverty and to ensure that we

have a minimum wage—and this is, unfortunately, not asking for too much—that is set at least at the poverty level, she talks about a step that this government could take that would at least give people that protection. If you go door to door in many communities in this city, in many communities around Ontario, and you talk to people who are trying to live on minimum wage—people who are working one, two or three jobs—you know very quickly that what they're being paid is not adequate for them to provide shelter for them and their families.

This bill may have some good intent, but it's going to need an awful lot of good work.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I gather that all three parties are going to be supporting this, which gives people in Ontario an idea of the unanimity of purpose we all have here. So setting aside all of the rhetorical flourishes, let's bring it back to what the bill is about. The member for Eglinton—Lawrence and I will both have a few minutes to speak on this in greater detail later in the afternoon, but for anybody who's tuning in, remember what the bill is about: The bill is about a complete ban on fees charged to caregivers. We all agree this is completely unfair. Let's be done with it. It's all about a prohibition on withholding passports and other personal documents that live-in caregivers arrive with. As an employer, you can't do that. Overwhelmingly, the people who employ live-in caregivers don't do that. Overwhelmingly, the people who employ live-in caregivers now and who employed them in decades past have treated them just like treasured members of the family. But like vulnerable people anywhere—there's a narrow band of people who think, "Oh, they're vulnerable. We'll abuse them."

These are some of the reforms suggested by a lot of the circles of primarily Filipino caregivers who, over the years, have banded together, and under the leadership of Culture Philippines in Toronto, Kalayaan community centre in Mississauga, and other similar organizations, have had a chance to get together, organize some of the problems and assist our government with this very thoughtful set of reforms which, when enacted, are going to right wrongs.

It also allows for stronger enforcement. It doesn't just say these are guidelines. It says these are laws, and it gives them teeth, and it's important.

As well, it also carries stiff penalties. There's no point in passing a law if there's no consequence for flouting it, and through Bill 210 here, there are very stiff consequences for flouting the law.

Let's get on with it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Parkdale—High Park, you have two minutes to respond.

1520

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to do this this afternoon.

Just to reiterate, the New Democratic Party are going to be defending this bill and are going to be voting for it.

We are also going to be fighting with equal vigour for some strong amendments. Among the amendments are going to be that the time to complain about employment standards violations for live-in caregivers should be longer. It should be the same as the length of time that is in the bill—42 months—to collect any unscrupulous and illegal fees paid by the nannies to recruiters. The right to unionize is a necessary right for everyone, but certainly a very necessary right for vulnerable live-in caregivers. So the right to unionize needs to be part of this bill as well, if you really, really want to help live-in caregivers. Something also worth discussing is a registry. I know that if you are a live-in caregiver in Manitoba, there is a registry you have to sign; they have to know where you are—so some kind of tracking of caregivers who come from other countries, who are very vulnerable and sometimes act as indentured servants, so we know where they are. Again, this would help enforcement.

Finally, and most importantly, whatever we do, we've got to enforce it. Where only 1% of all places of employment are ever visited by an employment standards person, this is going to make that situation even worse unless a whole lot of new employment standards officers are hired, and I don't see that as a line in the budget. So the critical thing here is enforcement.

The other critical aspect is to protect those woman who complained about Ruby Dhalla after they started work, not only leading up to and when they begin work, which is what this bill does. Thanks for speaking about this. It's always a pleasure to speak about workers' rights and the lack of them in the province of Ontario.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Mike Colle: I'm here this afternoon to try to shed some light on Bill 210. I think it is a piece of legislation that is going to be welcomed by a lot of people, and I think it has already been well received. Again, to put on the record—I know we sometimes assume that people understand this legislation—this is a bill to protect live-in caregivers who are not Canadian citizens. They are part of Ottawa's federal live-in caregiver program.

Many people, certainly outside the GTA, may not be familiar with it, but the live-in caregiver program helps Canadians hire foreign workers to live and work in their homes to care for children, the elderly or people with disabilities. Service Canada, which is part of the federal government, works with employers who wish to hire live-in caregivers while Citizenship and Immigration Canada works with foreign live-in caregiver applicants. Live-in caregivers may receive a work permit for up to three years if they meet program requirements. Special conditions allow a foreign live-in caregiver to apply for permanent residency after working for two years in Canada. This program has been in effect for about 17 years.

It is estimated that there are between 8,000 and 12,000 live-in caregivers who come from other countries to do this work in Canada every year. It's a very popular program. It is a program that, generally speaking, is seen as

a great entry into Canada by many workers who live in other countries. They really look to this program as a great ticket into Canada. Because Canada has such an outstanding reputation, it is a country they want to come to. So it's a very popular program.

I guess the root of the problem is that the program has been in place for 17 years and there have been no changes or adjustments to it. As a result of the notoriety given to the program, I think the federal government is undertaking some changes themselves. They've promised some legislative changes; their committees in Ottawa have looked at it. As much as we are trying to introduce some legislation here in Ontario, the same debate is taking place in Ottawa, where they are going to introduce some changes.

What happens in these programs, as you alluded to in your presentation, Madam Speaker, is that it's not the individual family that needs the caregiver that is the problem. What happens is that there are unscrupulous people, the middlemen and women, who try to exploit a program like this for personal gain. They're very aggressive, very well organized, and very well financed. They've tried to circumvent the laws of Canada and the laws of Ontario; not only that, but they've also run afoul of the laws in Hong Kong, China, the Philippines.

These unscrupulous recruiters' agencies have taken advantage of this program not to help the families that need the caregiver to help an elderly parent or grandparent or young children; they've come into it to make money on the backs of these very vulnerable people, who in many cases will put together their life's savings to come to Canada. That's what it is. It not only their life's savings; a whole extended family may contribute to the ability of a young woman in Manila, for instance, to come to Canada. So the whole family chips in every last dollar they have to make this possible.

But what's happened in recent years is that there has been a pattern which is well documented, certainly in the series by Robert Cribb and Dale Brazao in the *Toronto Star*, of systemic abuses by these recruitment agencies. Not all of them but a number of them have been very prolific in basically distorting the program, abusing the caregivers and charging exorbitant what they call placement fees to come to Canada. These recruiters charge the young woman who comes from Manila or Hong Kong or Cyprus, but they also charge the employer, so they're getting fees at both ends.

This is what Bill 210 tries to deal with. I'm sure we all know that this is not going to be easy, because the pattern has been that every time there has been an attempt to deal with these unscrupulous recruiters, they have morphed into another type of agency or another type of undertaking. They change their name; they change their registration; they change their modus operandi. For instance, what they've done is say, "Well, we didn't charge them a fee"—because fees, I think, are prohibited in Hong Kong. So what they do is charge these prospective workers for English-language proficiency courses, for Canadian acclimatization courses, for early childhood care courses,

all kinds of ruses that they use to charge a fee that they are not supposed to charge, because they are prohibited even in the country of origin.

This has been an ongoing pattern of these recruiters, trying to essentially abuse a good system. I think the live-in caregiver program is a good program and has been a good program. Many of the people I have talked to who have gone through as caregivers over the years find that it is a good entry point into Canada, because, as you know, Canada is a very difficult country to get into. Through the caregiver program, they can get to Canada, and after two years they can apply for permanent residency status, which invariably is such a sought-after prize by many people. That is one of the big benefits of this program, that you can gain entry into Canada.

That is not to say that—the people who come into Ontario programs are, generally speaking, well educated. Some have excellent credentials in medical care; some are even accredited nurses. Some have had years of experience. So they are highly qualified for the most part. They come here and offer these services, and then the families benefit because they have someone who is caring, who is well trained to help in taking care of an elderly, disabled relative or loved one or in taking care of children. The program has been very popular because of the support of the individual caregiver, who sees a great opportunity, and the family.

1530

That's not to say that in every case—we're pretty well aware of that—it works out. In some cases, it doesn't work out, and there is a friction between the employer and the caregiver. The trouble with the program is, there is very little recourse for the caregiver. If they get into a situation where they're not treated fairly, it's very difficult for them. I think you mentioned it in your dissertation. You said that the problem is that if they make a complaint or object to the way they're being treated—overworked, long hours—they're subject to the threat of deportation, that they've violated their terms of the contract that they've signed. They're deadly afraid of speaking out, and if they do speak out, the employer or, most of the time, the recruiter will threaten them with reprisal if they don't do what they're supposed to do. In many cases in the contract or the agreement, the original family isn't the one on the documentation.

It is a good program, but what hangs over the head of every caregiver is the threat of deportation. That's why they're afraid. Before this bill was passed, the Minister of Labour established a caregivers' hotline. One of the problems with that is that many of the caregivers who do express a concern on the hotline are afraid to give their names because of the reprisals. But as you know, it's pretty hard to make a labour standards complaint unless you give your name. It's like a Catch-22. It's a good program but then there's no recourse.

In this bill, there are some attempts to give protections to the caregivers and to have a recourse in terms of making a complaint. The thrust of this bill, for the most part, deals with the recruitment agencies, which, up until now, really have had very little control, any real stan-

dards. We had some controls here in Ontario, I think, up until 2002, where these agencies had to be licensed, and then that was withdrawn. But, I think, even licensing these people, as was licensed before 2002—and I've been critical of that, the fact that the licensing was taken away. But in some cases, these fraudulent agencies—you could license them and you could register them, but what they'd do is they'd get charged under one name and within two days they're up and running under another name. So it is very difficult, even under licensing, to really get to the heart of dealing with these fraudulent, fly-by-night agencies.

With the provisions here, at least it's an attempt by the government of Ontario, the Ministry of Labour, to finally involve the labour standards part of the legislation in the Ministry of Labour, plus the ministry itself and the inspection, in protecting these caregivers. At least there is now some government on the provincial side which will try to protect these vulnerable workers. Again, it's promising that the federal government has promised to do a number of things. Hopefully, the combination of these two things will put a dent—and I'm not naive enough, as I know you're not, to think that you're going to end all these systemic abuses which occur. But at least we're moving as a country, as a province, in the right direction in dealing with these abuses in the system.

As I've said, for the most part, the abuse is the result of these companies that have been flouting the laws of the province and of the country. They're international in scope. These are not fly-by-night. Some of them are very well organized, very well financed, because there is big money in foreign worker recruitment. They don't only recruit caregivers; they're also recruiting for Harvey's and they recruit for Wendy's, which is a case right there. I'm not sure what the fee is. They may make \$10,000 a head, because there has been a shortage of unskilled workers. That's sort of a misnomer, but anyway. These recruitment companies will recruit people from all over the world to come and work in Alberta. They work in Manitoba. There's big money in this recruitment. There is very little control nationally and provincially over these agencies.

Just to give you a flavour of this—because we may be familiar with it, but I don't think the public is—this is an example of how they operate. This is from the *Toronto Star* on March 14 of this year:

"Four months after being lured to Canada, housed in a basement and pressured by a nanny recruiter to work illegally"—because that's what happens. They come here under the pretence that they are supposed to work for one family; then they find out the family isn't there. This nanny's name is Filipina. She "summoned the courage to take back her life.

"Desperate and disillusioned," Filipina "stood on the doorstep of the woman who had brokered her entry to Canada—nanny recruiter Rakela," and "demanded return of the passport that had been taken from her."

That's why I'm glad that the legislation here prohibits the taking of passports and documentation, with fines up to \$50,000 for people who do this.

Filipina "claims in court documents that after her promised job with a Toronto family turned out to be bogus"—so there's no job—"she joined 16 other unemployed Filipina nannies sleeping on the floor" of Rakela's basement—that's the recruiter's basement; 16 sleeping on the floor in the basement—"in custody, detention, imprisonment and incarceration, without proper food ... harassed, frightened, scared." She said she and the other nannies were 'exploited to work for Rakela and under stress, pressured, pushed and oppressed.'

"Following a curt exchange," her recruiter handed the nanny, "a demure 44-year-old mother of four," her passport, and served her notice that a lawsuit was coming and that she owed \$3,500 back to the recruitment agency.

This is typical of the stories that occur where these nannies will pay \$5,000 or \$10,000 to these recruiters. In some cases, recruiters who are supposed to have lined up a job don't have that job, so what they do is they pretend to lend the nannies money and they charge them interest rates from 20% to 30% on the money they lend to the caregivers. So they have no job, they are in the basement of the recruiter, and the recruiter has their passport and their bank book.

This is the kind of systemic abuse that takes place in Ontario, but it not only takes place here. I talked to a woman who said that her cousin was talking about a caregiver in Vancouver who was working 16 or 18 hours a day cooking and taking care of a family—16 or 18 hours a day, seven days a week. The caregiver finally ran away from the employer in Vancouver when the employer wouldn't give the caregiver one hour off on Sunday to go to church. That's the kind of abuse that occurs when there is no oversight.

As I said at the beginning, it's not to say that there aren't an incredibly good number of families who have caregivers in their homes, and there are a number of very good situations, but I think the root of the problem with the live-in caregiver program is the unscrupulous recruiters who charge fees and are above the law. Right now, there is no federal law and there is no provincial law that basically deals with these unscrupulous recruiters. They're blatant, they're aggressive, they're obscene in the way they deal with not only the caregivers but even the unsuspecting family that desperately needs a caregiver. So the recruiters are the ones this bill rightfully attacks, imposing fines, and it is even stronger in some respects than the Manitoba legislation, whereby it also makes it known that you can be liable, upon conviction, to 12 months in jail. So it's a serious piece of legislation. I certainly don't think we're going to see the end of this kind of systemic abuse, but I think we're seeing the light at the end of the tunnel.

I'm very happy to support this. As you know, Madam Speaker, I introduced my own private member's bill back in March when this horrific situation was well publicized by the *Toronto Star* series, and in talking with a lot of my own constituents, it's an obvious, necessary undertaking with Bill 210. I'm glad to see that my private member's

bill helped spur some interest and action and that now we have the government and the Ministry of Labour doing it. I hope that the Ministry of Labour will have the tools it needs to deal with these unscrupulous recruiters especially, and to make us all aware of the need to ensure that, whether a person is a foreign worker or is a fifth generation Canadian, there are certain basic labour protections that should be in place and we should be cognizant of.

1540

Just because a person doesn't speak English that well or just because a person is a foreign worker—because as you know, every year Ontario brings in 50,000 workers from the islands, from Mexico, to pick all of our fruits and vegetables. We've been doing that for years, and most of them are very well treated and they love coming back to Canada. But hopefully, this is the beginning of saying that we must have good, protective legislation for our workers and ensure that their dignity is respected, their working conditions are reasonable and that they are treated in a fair and a very Canadian manner.

So I just hope this sends a bit of a scare into recruiters who are unscrupulous and that the good recruitment agencies or the good companies that engage in this kind of work will become supportive and that we will get the bad actors out of the way, because they are of no value to the employer, who in many cases is as innocent as the caregiver. Let's work together with the federal government and ensure that we begin to take control of this Wild West situation which has existed for too long.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have a chance to respond to the member for Eglinton—Lawrence, who spoke on Bill 210 just now. I know that over the course of the afternoon, there has been considerable discussion about this bill, and some of the comments that have come forward from our side have expressed a concern that our caucus has yet to have the opportunity to even caucus this bill. It's unfortunate that the government called it for debate so quickly after presenting it. I know that we'll have a chance to discuss it tomorrow at caucus, but I would think that our debate would have been more informed had all the caucuses had a chance to discuss the bill before its presentation at second reading today.

I listened with some interest to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence and I don't doubt his sincerity on this issue, but there is a concern that has been expressed this afternoon about the issue of warrantless entry into people's homes. I don't know if the member—I certainly didn't hear him address that issue. Perhaps he did and I just missed it, but I would ask him to comment on that provision of the bill and give it some consideration and defend the government's legislation in this regard.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto—Danforth.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My response to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence: He's described a situation that is truly Dickensian. I have to say to the member that your speech was solid, well researched and well presented, but I have to say that some of it's quite extraordinary to me,

and, frankly, given what you've described, one would think that this bill should be much stronger than it is.

Your comment that these recruiting agencies are making money by bringing in people to work at Wendy's and Harvey's—I'll take you at your word. But the suggestion that there's a shortage of unskilled workers: I have to say that I don't think there is any shortage of workers out there at all. There's a shortage of people who can make things work in their lives at the minimum wage that these companies are paying, so it's far easier to recruit someone from a country where \$8 an hour is a substantial wage. For people who have been in Canada for a while, clearly you can't keep a roof over your head unless you have two or even three of these jobs. So I would say that what you've described is horrific, and requires attention and action on the part of the government. I will speak, when it's my opportunity, about how this bill needs to be strengthened so that in fact the Dickensian elements are addressed.

The idea that not only are these recruiters taking direct fees from people in the amounts of \$5,000 to \$10,000 but are then charging payday loan kinds of rates of interest of 20% to 30% or higher, calls out for a very comprehensive response on the part of the government to shut down these operations.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to engage again in this discussion.

The member from Eglinton—Lawrence is a little modest, but I would suggest to the House that we're looking at a gentleman who, time and time again, has been ahead of the curve and has brought forward some of the most important issues that we've dealt with as a government before it actually became apropos to do so. I commend the member for his work in that community and on this issue. He has done that several times on other issues, so I want to put it on the record that I respect deeply our friend's capacity to see events that need correcting. So he has done that.

The member from Wellington—Halton Hills asked a couple of questions. The one that I will address very quickly—it may not be the full details of the bill, but there is opportunity and reason to do warrantless entry now. You can do warrantless entry under the scope of the humane society act that we passed. We can also do warrantless entry when given permission. When given permission by the householder to have them enter, they don't need a warrant.

Quite frankly, this is not to go get the person in their house; this is to get the person when it has been done illegally. They are subject to not knowing sometimes, and that's the problem. The problem is that they're not aware that they've been duped by a middleman, and if they knew that, they may not be engaging that nanny. So if they were to offer the police an opportunity to enter the home, that is warrantless entry and that's absolutely legal. So that part of it is another issue that I think needs to be discussed.

Very contrary to what the member was concerned about at the beginning of his speech, the previous government had a habit of not even doing committees and not even taking the bills to the public. Proportionately, in their last term, 87% of their bills were time-allocated. So throwing the stones, I hear glass shattering very loudly from the member opposite who wants to bring up these points.

But having said that, I'm in full support of the member from Eglinton–Lawrence's comments and I'm really glad that he's on our side.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to comment on the bill too. A number of the members on this side said that some of those comments weren't exactly accurate, but I'll leave that to others. I wasn't here at the time. Anyway, two wrongs don't make a right.

Bill 210, employment protection for foreign nationals, has been spoken about many times here today. I think the member for Eglinton–Lawrence did a great job in defending the bill.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: He didn't mention warrantless entry.

Mr. Robert Bailey: "He didn't mention warrantless entry," as the member said to me.

A number of the issues that we had on this side were about the warrantless entry, where it was a poison pill put into the bill, an abuse of power, we feel. Just because the humane society can do that doesn't mean that's right either. A lot of people had a problem with that when that was passed.

Interjection.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes. So we wanted to make those points on this side of the House. We thought that there have been abuses of foreign workers. Many times it has been documented and well-known. But sometimes you go too far when you bring in legislation that can impact other people who have done nothing wrong. We feel that some of this legislation we've seen lately is reactive. A number of these things should have been in place long ago but haven't been.

We'll look forward to the rest of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton–Lawrence has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, good friends from Sarnia–Lambton and Wellington and Toronto–Danforth and Brant. You raised some good issues.

I want to mention that in a way I'm disappointed. This is the plight of some very, very hard-done-by workers here, and much-overdue legislation, and all they're talking about is one thing. But I'll try and clear that up. I thought more time would be spent talking about this incredible industry of exploitation that we have in Ontario and not doing anything about.

1550

Just on entry: First of all, if you take the passports and the identification of the caregivers, then employment

standards can go before the justice of the peace and get a warrant to get those back. Right now, they are not being able to be retrieved. In terms of the warrantless entry, it's a law that has been on the books—I think it was the Conservatives who put the law on the books. I think it was Bill Davis in 1974. Under the Employment Standards Act, in his wisdom, Bill Davis said that it's possible for an employment standards officer to visit workplaces. Now, if a workplace was your home, then the owner of the home could deny entry, and then you would require a warrant. I think Bill Davis was pretty wise in doing that. But it was a good question; I think this place is all about asking good questions.

Again, I think we can all agree that we have to do some work in this area, that there's some systemic, abusive exploitation—

Interjection.

Mr. Mike Colle: The member from Halton doesn't see this as serious, but there are people being systemically abused by people for profit—big profit—and right now they're above the law. This is an attempt to bring them under the law. The member from Halton doesn't agree with that, but I think it's time.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's an honour to be able to speak to this bill today.

Applause.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you. Again, member from Eglinton–Lawrence, I appreciate what you had to say—the facts you put on the record today—and I will make further reference to them. I'm saying that in a very straightforward way; I'm not playing any games with your commentary.

Before I launch into a discussion about the bill itself, let's just look at the context within which this is necessary. Let's look at the global reality that puts us in a situation where we are bringing in workers who will work in very precarious situations for very low wages, and who in fact will pay a large amount of money to do that. I talk to my constituents in Toronto–Danforth—you have a couple, both of whom are working full-time, in a situation where daycare is extraordinarily hard to get, and because of their combined incomes, they're not eligible for any subsidy, and subsidized spots being very hard to get. Many of them say to me that for the amount they would pay for daycare, which would be in the range of \$25,000 to \$30,000 a year, they're just as well off to hire a nanny, a temporary foreign worker to come in to look after those children.

It speaks to me about the profound problem we have with daycare in this province when it is cheaper to bring someone over from another part of the world rather than hire people here in Ontario, provide them with decent employment and provide our children with good, regulated care. Instead, what we're doing is taking advantage of the desperation of people around the world—in eastern Europe, Asia, Latin America and Africa—for whom \$8 a day is the norm, not \$8 or \$9 an hour. The

reality of our taking advantage of global desperation is one that I find very distressing. It speaks to a lack of social support in this society and in this province.

When you were speaking as a member, Madam Speaker, you spoke about how many of these workers live as indentured workers. It's a term we don't use much, but in the 19th century—in the 1800s and probably in the 1700s before that—there were workers who were indentured, essentially sold into labour in a company for a specified period of time with severe legal penalties for leaving that work. Their rights as free citizens had been sold away, often by parents, to tell you the truth, for an amount of cash. It is extraordinary to me, because that reality is here again today. That Dickensian world is being replicated here in Ontario in the 21st century. The member from Eglinton–Lawrence is right: It is quite shocking to Canadian sensibilities that people would, in this day and age, effectively still be indentured servants—and they are indentured servants.

Just before I talk about the act, there's that whole question of jobs that Canadians won't do: I think about Wendy's, I think about Harvey's, I think about a wide range of minimum-wage jobs that people won't take. The simple reality is that if you pay people enough money to live on, they'll do all kinds of things. There are people in this city who work in the Ashbridges Bay sewage treatment plant, which, as a city councillor, I had an opportunity to tour, who work in the most difficult and odoriferous of conditions. They deal with very unpleasant circumstances and substances, and yet the reality is, they are paid decently. They do very critical, necessary work but they put up with an awful lot of unpleasantness.

If people are having to be recruited from the developing world to work in restaurants and fast food companies, it is not because Canadians don't want to do the work; it's because the wages are so low that people who are desperate come and do that work. No one in this society should have to be desperate.

I have a friend from Brampton whose wife went to Alberta to work in a Tim Hortons. She's a Sikh and had spent five to 10 years going from temporary agency to temporary agency trying to get a full-time job, trying to get a job that paid more than minimum wage. Finally, because of the labour shortages in Alberta, because of the mammoth subsidy to the tar sands development, she was able to get a job at Tim Hortons at something like \$15 to \$20 an hour. So she actually was attracted to that work because they were paying enough to make it worthwhile.

I don't think that we have a problem so much of work Canadians won't do as one of wages that are so low that they discourage people from doing that work, that they can't make ends meet.

To come to this bill—a bill that, quite correctly, member from Eglinton–Lawrence, tries to address some of the worst of these Dickensian excesses—I have to say to you, the bill as written needs to go much further. I think the member from Parkdale–High Park spoke to that quite effectively in her leadoff on this issue.

The first point that we have concern with as New Democrats is that the government has explicitly rejected

the notion of temporary foreign worker employer licensing. The concern I have for those on the government benches who were focused on this issue is: How do you actually know where people are working? How do you know where the workplaces are? How do you know where the law is to be enforced or not enforced?

Just last week we were debating the amendments of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. In that case, there was no accurate list of propane businesses in Ontario, and we saw that as a substantial problem because, frankly, if you're enforcing the law you need to know where things are happening. If you don't know where people are employed, you can't enforce the law. Registration seems an utterly reasonable thing to do. It becomes a place of employment when you hire a live-in caregiver or a nanny; yes, it's your home, but it has also become a workplace.

It seems entirely reasonable that Ontario should require employers of temporary foreign workers to register with the Ministry of Labour, just as Manitoba's Worker Recruitment and Protection Act does. To my knowledge, Manitoba has not crumbled as a society recently and seems to be able to have this sort of legislation within its society, and families continue on. It seems reasonable. Manitoba employers are required to provide information about the employer, the position to be filled by the foreign worker, and contact information for individuals who will directly or indirectly be involved in recruiting foreign workers for the employer, among other matters.

The member from Eglinton–Lawrence was right: Companies that engage in what you might almost call human trafficking—and I'm sure in some instances there are companies that are very explicitly that—will morph into a variety of forms, will be constant shape-shifters in order to get around the law. At a minimum, we should know who they're contracting with. People who are employing temporary foreign workers are going to be the one contact point where we have some certainty as to who we're dealing with and who we're not dealing with. It may also give us some evidence and information over time about these recruitment agencies. Requiring this kind of information would assist workers at the Ministry of Labour in improving compliance with the Employment Standards Act. It makes sense to me. How do you have a sense of where the Employment Standards Act needs to be enforced if you don't know where the places of employment are?

1600

An effective bill would ensure that employers are refused the right to register to hire a temporary foreign worker if the employer has provided false information, has previously violated the Employment Standards Act directly or indirectly, or if there are reasonable grounds to believe the employer will not act in accordance with the law.

It seems to me that if we're going to protect temporary foreign workers, to the extent we don't take the steps necessary to make such a program redundant, then how are we going to protect people? The conditions that were

described were, I think, quite honestly, Dickensian. What steps need to be taken to ensure that those sorts of conditions are addressed? That registration seems a relatively simple, a relatively fundamental, step that one would take to at least make things visible to the government and to employers so that they would know that, yes, they have to register and those who have a record of behaving badly, of treating people improperly, would be barred. That, again, seems fair to me. It seems to be the right approach to take.

In terms of fees, prior to the repeal of Ontario's Employment Agencies Act in 2000, employment and staffing agencies could not charge any fees to workers for permanent or temporary work. Without a statutory ban on fees, the practice of charging workers fees for permanent and temporary placement has become commonplace. What an extraordinary reality. The member from Eglinton-Lawrence cited that, and the figure he used was \$5,000 to \$10,000 per worker. I'm willing to accept those figures. I find that staggering. For people from the developing world, from eastern Europe, we're talking a number of years of wages—extraordinary.

That issue is going to be a hard one to come to grips with because, you're right, you can call fees anything you want: tuition, acclimatization to Canada. You can play around the margins extensively. But at least if you have in law a prohibition on the fees, it gives you a lever to start prying open the box to see what's hidden in there, to see whether, in fact, that so-called Canadian acclimatization course was worth \$10,000 or simply a scam to extract money from people who are desperate in the first place.

The NDP believes that the charging of fees should be prohibited for all workers, whether the worker is hired under one of the federal temporary foreign worker programs or not. All who work or seek work in Ontario should be protected from fees for recruitment and employment. And generally speaking, let's face it, the people who pay those fees are the ones who have the least amount of money. If you are a person who can command a salary in the \$150,000, \$200,000, \$300,000 range, you aren't shelling out 10,000 bucks. No. You don't pay fees unless you desperately need work.

Further, where recruitment agencies fail to meet their obligations to recruit and place workers in employment, then the recruitment agency should be held responsible for all monetary losses incurred by the worker. And why not? Why should the burden be placed on these people who are coming here to work for so little?

The NDP believes that Ontario needs an expansive prohibition on direct and indirect fees for all workers to avoid creating unintentional loopholes that allow companies to bypass the intent of prohibiting fees for work. No question, we will deal with people who will quite cleverly shift the shells around the table trying to hide the pea, trying to play a game with us or with any regulatory authority, and in this, we are going to have to make sure that there are a broad range of powers to allow governments to go in and get access to those realities, pry open that box. For example, in terms of playing games with

fees, an employment agency licensed in Alberta to recruit foreign workers recently contracted an agency in Singapore to recruit workers. The Singapore agency charged workers fees on behalf of the Alberta agency.

So you're right, people can be quite devious, companies can be quite devious. They can play around and call a fee something very different or simply have someone else collect it for them and remit it through an offshore bank. Restoring regulatory prohibition of fees for all recruitment and employment placement services would reduce inequalities that workers in Ontario face in comparison to most other Canadian jurisdictions where such fees are prohibited.

When you first look at this bill, it says to you that there are real shortcomings in these areas around making visible and transparent who the employers are, making it clear that bad employers are not going to be able to take advantage of this program in the future. There are shortcomings with regard to the charging of fees. Those things have to be addressed when this bill is debated in committee.

Recovering recruitment costs from caregivers: Recruiting workers for permanent placement with an employer is a service provided to the client of the agency, and the employer should pay any fees associated with this service, not the worker. It seems to go without saying, doesn't it? If, in fact, there is a cost to do that, the person who is making the least in all of this should not be paying that amount. People should not have to pay money to work.

That's part of Canadian history when you think about it, the whole history of company stores in resource towns, where people would not be paid with the coin of the realm. They would be paid with company money, and they would have to buy at a company store. And as much as it was common in the 19th century, it was something that was hated. Just because it was common and normal didn't mean that it was good.

Some day we'll look back at this practice of charging minimum-wage workers astronomical fees for the right and privilege and opportunity to come and work in Canada and make so little, and say, "Why on earth was this allowed? How on earth was this allowed to continue and be part of everyday life in this country?"

The NDP believes that it is in the public interest to ensure that all recruiters and employers are equally prohibited from charging fees for work. This creates a level playing field for employers and reduces discrimination against workers because of their form of employment; that is, temporary foreign workers.

The NDP is concerned that there are too many exemptions in this area and too much is left to regulation. Exemptions will create loopholes for agencies to bypass the remedial purpose of prohibiting fees. This is one that I expect our critic will be following very closely in the course of committee hearings, in the course of amendments. There is no reason that this cannot be corrected in the course of debating and amending this legislation.

We're concerned as well about enforcement. The government has to allocate adequate resources for proactive

enforcement of recruiters and employers. Recruiters and employers must undergo training provided by the Ministry of Labour on their legal responsibilities. The majority of people in this society have not been and will not be employers. It stands to reason that they should at least be given some of the rudiments of employment standards law before they employ someone. Given that they're taking advantage of this program, they should have a grounding in the basic law so that, even unintentionally, they don't mistreat the people who are in their employ.

Employers should be required to provide written information about employment standards rights to employees hired under the temporary foreign worker program. Required written information should be developed by the Ministry of Labour and provided in languages appropriate to workers under the temporary foreign worker program. Again, it seems entirely sensible that employers should be fully aware of their responsibilities and their rights, that workers should be fully aware of their responsibilities and their rights and that that should be done in language that eliminates misunderstandings because of poor translation. People need to know these realities so that the Dickensian conditions that have been described are hopefully swept away, but at least in the short term we start to erode them substantially. This should not be part of our society, not in this century.

1610

The bill focuses on regulating recruitment of temporary foreign caregivers and temporary foreign workers. The NDP believes that this government needs to consider other initiatives to enhance protections for all temporary foreign nationals in Ontario, and I'd like to spend a little time talking about those other temporary foreign nationals who need to have their issues addressed because, in fact, there's a broad range of people who need to be treated more fairly.

I understand that I'm running short of time, and my hope is that my colleague the member from Timmins—James Bay will touch on a number of those issues when it comes to his turn to speak.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening to a number of very valid insights that the member from Toronto—Danforth put forward. In this legislation, what they have tried to do is deal with the issue of ensuring that these recruiters don't do things indirectly, because they're masters at this. As the member from Toronto—Danforth said, they would charge the fees in a foreign country; therefore, they would seem to be able to subvert Canadian and Ontario laws. The other scam is that they pretend they have these orientation courses, they have these acclimatization courses, administrative fees—they have a whole series.

The legislation does say that they cannot charge fees directly or indirectly. Section 8:

"No employer shall directly or indirectly recover or attempt to recover from a foreign national or from such other persons as may be prescribed,

"(a) any cost incurred by the employer in the course of arranging to become or attempting to become an employer of a foreign national as a live-in caregiver or in other prescribed employment...."

So these costs cannot be passed on to the caregiver. They must be paid essentially by the recruiter, and what the recruiters should do—or technically say they're doing—is pass them on to the employer, not to the worker. So it's an attempt to deal with this.

It's not going to be easy because, given the track record, I see how devious and how systemic this abuse is. There's going to be an attempt by the Ministry of Labour to do this, but I think we're going to have to keep an eye on the abuses, as they might morph into other areas.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: As usual, I came back. I was watching this in my office, and I came back in to comment on the member from Toronto—Danforth, because I think his sincerity was evident in his remarks. I commend him for that. Everything he said was in support of vulnerable employees, and I think that is a rightful position and a position I'd like to strongly support myself.

But it's in the small detail, once again, where you really get your fingers slapped at this. There are a couple of things. One of them is the warrantless entry provision, but even if you look in the purpose clause of the legislation, it smacks of a lot of government regulations and a lot of government oversight. The section that says, "The records to be kept by employers and recruiters are specified," as outlined in sections 14 and 15 of the bill. Provisions for enforcement are in light of the Ministry of Labour Employment Standards Act. There are provisions for contravention of the act that sound to me like fines and penalties.

I need to know that there's due process for both parties to the agreement. No one wants vulnerable—in many cases—new Canadians or people new to Canada—they need to be protected. That's clear. We support that provision. What we don't need is the child care police running around, coming into homes unwanted and causing undue challenges.

The other part of Bill 210—the whole idea of civil liberties is being breached here: "should take place as soon as possible to ensure that the security and just treatment of foreign nationals who are live-in caregivers"—but, as I said, not at the cost of civil liberties. It sounds good, but if it doesn't achieve the goal of fairness for new Canadians and employees who are vulnerable, then the bill fails. It's maybe not strong enough.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: As always, the member from Toronto—Danforth stays on focus and talks about the bill. Let me assure him again, and I remind the House, that this is a fluid piece of legislation. He does mention that he's concerned about other circumstances outside the scope of the caregivers, and that is another issue. This one is being specifically designed for this particular

issue, because of the enormity of the problem. It doesn't mean that we shouldn't be coming back, and I thank the member for continuing to remind us that these kinds of legislation are ongoing. Unfortunately, the bad guys are always trying to find a way to break the law. We're sometimes catching up to them and sometimes trying to move around to position ourselves. That's the intent of the legislation.

Unfortunately, the characterization of some, who are basically saying they're afraid of the daycare cops—that's not the intent. The idea—and I think you alluded to it—is that when somebody takes somebody's passport and takes somebody's papers or verification of who they are, and they no longer have access to prove who they are, on the federal level it's very easy for them to be the victim and the person who is stealing that material is seen, for some strange reason, as a broker of good news. So, yes, we have to find the balance of what we're talking about, but in essence what we're talking about is a problem that everyone in this House so far has agreed is a problem, and how we attack it and how we do it is an important aspect.

I assure the member, and the members of the official opposition, that we do go to committee and we do tend to have deputations and shop these things around for us drill them down and make them better. I appreciate the member's comments on the issue so far.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Toronto–Danforth has up to two minutes to respond.

Interjection.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I have to respect the eagerness of my colleague from Timmins–James Bay.

My thanks to the members from Eglinton–Lawrence, Durham and Brant for their comments—almost always generous, gentlemen, almost always generous.

This bill is—what can I say?—much later than one would want and not as strong as we need it to be.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: The Ruby Dhalla bill? This is the Ruby Dhalla bill, right?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: There's no question—and I appreciate the suggestion from my seatmate—that much of this has come to the surface because of the Ruby Dhalla case and the fact that the situation of the women in her employ has been made public, made visible and seen to be utterly desperate. It isn't just in her household that people face these difficulties, as you are well aware.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: In a place of work, because she was using them for work.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The reality is that there are temporary foreign workers, not only in households but working in our farm fields, who face extraordinarily difficult situations, and we in this Legislature have a responsibility to uphold those principles, those moral ideals that I would say most Ontarians think are an inherent part of our character; that is, treating people with fairness, not exploiting them, and treating people with a sense of caring so that they can be full members of this society.

What we have before us is a Dickensian situation, one that most of us don't have to deal with and most of us don't have to live through. Now that we have this bill before us, we should be taking full advantage, making sure that these fundamental problems in our society are addressed with a bill that needs a little more strength than the one we have before us.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Bob Delaney: For those who are watching, admittedly we now have a bill, Bill 210, that all three parties have indicated they are going to support, and what this has brought out of all of us in the House, I think, is an example of how legislation really should be made. It is not the opposition's function to say, "Wow, you've got a great bill"; it is the opposition's function to say, "We're going to support this bill, but we want to make sure it's the best that it can be." To that extent, I'd just like to say that as a member who has only been here for six years, I'm kind of proud of the way the House is working this afternoon.

1620

There are, I know, an awful lot of caregivers, and very largely Filipino caregivers, who are following the passage of this bill with particular interest, so I guess in the interests of a community that over the last 20 years I've had the great luxury and privilege of getting to know, in terms of greeting them, I would just like to say:

Remarks in Tagalog.

In Tagalog, that just means "Good day to everybody."

I think I'd like to take some of my remarks today and begin by saying that this is how we measure ourselves in government. We don't consider ourselves successful in government if we look at how well we treat the wealthy, the degree to which we cater to the powerful, or the degree to which we support those who were born and raised here in Canada. This bill, Bill 210, deals with rights and enforcement of provisions that mostly relate to female caregivers who come, in a very large number of cases, from the Philippines and who come here as vulnerable people who are not citizens of Canada.

What this bill does say is how we as Ontarians deal with the weak, the unempowered and the vulnerable in our society, and how we bring to bear the measures of the state to ensure that those people are treated fairly. That's the thrust of this bill. That's primarily what I'd like to talk about here this afternoon.

Now, you know, the Filipino community is a very proud and very well-established one, even by our multi-cultural standards here in Ontario. It traces its roots to significant immigration from the Philippines back to the early 1960s. I can remember when they had the centennial of Philippine independence at the SkyDome in July 1998. I attended that, and in fact for the program, I assisted by doing the drafting of the history of the Filipino community in Canada. I've gotten to know, over the years, very many of the people who help make the community go, and it is a community that I've found to be very proud, very well educated, and one that comes

from a gentle, maternalistic society in which the notion of harming one another is, by and large, a foreign one.

Many of the nannies, caregivers, by whatever name we choose to call them, when they arrive here are coming here expecting the best. They're not coming here assuming that people who sent them, representing themselves as foreign worker recruiters, are instead in many respects what we know in human trafficking as snakeheads, which is an occupation I find completely reprehensible. The harder we hit them, the better, and in this respect, I do hope that the feds, for their part, can adopt measures that enable us to get at de facto snakeheads in the Philippines.

Among the Filipinos, we have now nearly two generations who have grown up here in Canada, and among those who have come here from the old country, we also have a very vibrant group of Filipinos who are graduates of the University of the Philippines. In all of Asia, one of the finest places that you can say that you are a graduate of is the University of the Philippines, and we've got a huge UP Alumni Association here which takes a real proprietary interest in how vulnerable people from the homeland are treated when they come here. As a result, there are a number of Filipino organizations, Culture Philippines here in Toronto, and in Mississauga, the Kalayaan Cultural Community Centre—which, coincidentally, is located in the home riding, Mississauga East—Cooksville, of the Minister of Labour.

Their building is one for which they began saving some 11 years ago, taking the profits that they made from that wonderful day at the SkyDome—on which everybody predicted they would lose money. In fact, they made a ton of money off it, and over the years very carefully saved and grew the money, matching it with donations and building it up to the point where in Mississauga they were actually able to acquire this very large unit which now serves as the KCCC's headquarters. It was my privilege to attend a number of functions there just after they opened it.

With that as some background on the community from which many of the caregivers come, I'd like to talk a little bit about them. Our caregivers come from all over the Philippines, and while Tagalog or, in some of the other areas from which they come, Ilokano or Visayan may be their primary language, most, if not all, will speak either very good or nearly perfect English. In the Philippines we've got a blend of Chinese, Malay and Spanish with, from the late 19th century onwards, a fairly heavy influence from the United States.

So culturally, Filipinos find it very easy to come here and to integrate. As a result, they are very easy immigrants for us in Canada to accept, because they come here well educated, knowing the language and understanding the culture and the customs. They integrate very easily into the society, to the point where a lot of the generation that's come from the old country looks at their kids and they say, "They're losing all of their ties to the Philippines." Well, of course they are. It's so easy to integrate into Canadian society, which is a lot of the thrust for setting up the cultural centres throughout the GTA.

The existence of the cultural community centres has also provided a magnet for so many of the caregivers who have come here from the Philippines to be able to gather together to find a community of interest from among others who have also come from the Philippines and to sit down and say to each other, "Well, did somebody charge you a fee?" "No." "They charged me a fee." "What do you mean, someone has taken your passport? They're not allowed to take your passport." Someone will say, "They're not?" "No, you've got to be able to keep your passport. That's your document, along with the other personal documents. Your employer can't take that from you."

Gradually, one was able to gather together kind of a critical mass of what things are going wrong. That actually made the drafting of the legislation fairly easy to target very narrowly, to say we are out to correct a specific wrong and we actually know a fair amount about the scale and the scope of the wrong we're out to correct, because the people who are being wronged, Filipino caregivers and caregivers who come from other countries, by and large, find it easy to gather together, and there's a community around them to provide some support and to bring those concerns forward to people like us and to the agencies that offer some assistance.

If you've come from the Philippines, very often you're not prepared for what to expect in Canada. What comes to mind is a function I was at one time where we were recognizing Filipinos who had made outstanding contributions to their communities. There was one lady there who was a researcher who now lives in Toronto but had done a great deal of work at the University of Alberta. In terms of not really being able to be prepared for the paradigm of life in Canada, she was telling the group there when she did her acceptance, "You know, when I left the Philippines, people said, 'It's cold in Canada.' "So," she said, "I brought a sweater." She had moved to Edmonton in the winter. Needless to say, this particular lady, as is the case with a lot of caregivers who come, faced some pretty sharp shocks with many of the things that especially we here in Ontario have learned over the years to grow accustomed to.

Boy, your first winter here in Ontario can be cold. I can remember, after my six lovely years living out in British Columbia, my first winter back here in Ontario. Oh, boy, did I suffer. I thought to myself, "This has got to be the coldest winter on record," but of course it wasn't. But if you've come here from a country that's at just about the same latitude as Hong Kong, so it's not exactly tropical but it's not very far from it—and the Philippines, as we've just seen tragically in the last few weeks, is very prone to being hit by tropical storms coming out of the Pacific. If you've come from that environment in which your winter wardrobe borders on the non-existent—a light jacket is about it—the first thing that hits you when you come to Canada is the weather.

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So, many of the ladies who come here are actually fairly well educated and they are in fact conversant or fully literate in English, but this is still not their home.

Anybody who has ever changed cities, even within your own country, knows how initially disorienting it is to move to a new city. I remember leaving my native Montreal to come here to Toronto and thinking to myself how odd it was to see signs not only written in English, but signs that didn't have the pictorial expressions that we were so used to in Montreal from Expo 67. Directions that were written in English words on signs in Toronto were written in universal sign language in Montreal, and I had to get used to reading signs written in words in English. That was just a tiny example, and I was born and raised in this country. So try to imagine that you've just come from the Philippines, and you've come from a warm country to a cold country, from a small country to a big country, from a crowded country to a spread-out country, from a country that's nowhere near as diverse and multicultural as Canada to one which is the world's most thriving, dynamic, multicultural metropolis—not only the most dynamic, multicultural metropolis that the world has now, but the most dynamic, growing, vibrant multicultural metropolis the world has ever seen in all of its recorded history.

When they arrive here, in addition to those things, many caregivers don't really have a circle of friends, and some, though not all, don't have a lot of family here. So they end up dropping down into this place, which is as different from the Philippines as it's probably possible to be—they're almost exactly halfway around the world—and they're very strongly dependent on their employers, and that creates a dependency bond the employers have to be respectful of. Overwhelmingly, Canadians are. Overwhelmingly, from the standpoint of the employers, the employers look upon the caregivers as someone who is part of their family, and when you look at the range and scope of the duties that caregivers perform for their employers, there is in fact a synergy in there.

Very often, the employers are a working couple with children. Certainly, out in our area, where those families are out of the house at a quarter after 7 in the morning—as I've told my staff, during elections, in some of the areas that are fairly heavily Asian, "Don't schedule me to canvas those polls on a weekday evening, because nobody is home until 7:30 or 8 or 8:30." We only have a very narrow window of time in which we can safely knock on those doors before it's 9 o'clock and people don't want to see you, which is perfectly normal. Those are the kind of people who, in the main, are going to be employing those Filipino workers. They're busy people. They have demanding lives, and they depend on the Filipino caregivers to come in and, to a limited or, in many cases, a very large extent, raise their families, look after their homes and simply be there when otherwise no one is in what are often fairly substantial homes.

The abuse that Bill 210 aims to address is abuse that has gone on longer than just recently. It's abuse that caregivers have complained about for years and on which, as a government, we have sometimes moved not fast enough. In this case, this is a comprehensive set of measures. These are measures with teeth.

Let's focus on some of the things that this bill does.

What it says is that there is a complete ban on fees. If you're coming here as a Filipino caregiver or as a caregiver from anywhere in the world, no one can charge you money. That money is paid by your employer. If somebody back home says, "Well, you need to do this, that or the next thing and pay me money," you should be aware of it. If you know of this happening back home, for heaven's sake call up and tell them that no one will charge you fees.

Secondly and very importantly, there is a prohibition on withholding your passport and withholding your personal documents. When you arrive, when you step off the plane, no one can take your documents from you. No one can ask you for them. You should store them in your room or in a safe place. If you trust your employers and your employer has a good relationship with you and they say, "Okay. Can we store them for you in our safety deposit box?", I'm not saying no, but I am saying to be careful, because those are documents that belong to you, and if you say, "I want them," you should be able to go and get them, then and there. That basically speaks to the bond between the employer and the caregiver, but no one can say, "No, you can't have them back." If you ask for them back, they have to give them to you. They have to, and if anybody says anything else, it's time to report them. There's no grey area here.

Secondly, this is legislation with teeth. There's a means to enforce it because, as the member for Parkdale-High Park said in her address, if you're employing a caregiver, your home is a workplace and your home should be subject to the same reasonable conditions that exist in any other workplace, and that's how the bill treats a home in which a caregiver works. It's a workplace, and it's important to remember that because no one can say to you, "You must stay in your workplace," because if, as a caregiver, you say to yourself, "Would it be realistic if my employer said, 'You can't leave work to go home today?'" You'd say, "No, I can't. Work is over. I need to go home and have dinner. I need to go home to be with my family." You can do that too. Even as a live-in caregiver, you have the reasonable right and the complete freedom to leave the home when you have to leave the home, but nobody can say you can't go out. You can.

It's also important to talk about the fact that the caregivers who come here tend to be very trusting people. They have a very strong sense of family values. They come from, as I said earlier, a maternal culture with a tradition that raising children is the most important thing that a family can do. It is not fair for an employer to prey upon the carefully inculcated values of a Filipino caregiver to say, "How could you neglect my children? I insist that you stay here," or, "You can't neglect my children. I won't give you your documents." You can't prey on a caregiver by using a sense of guilt. It's now illegal. You can't do it.

A conscientious caregiver will give the children a structure and an order that the parents, almost by definition, are not around to provide. It's something that chil-

dren need, and it provides the parents, who often both have challenging careers, a sense of security themselves, knowing that if they leave very early in the morning, as most of them do, and are out all day working very hard, running and managing businesses, as very many of them do, back home someone is physically in their house, which tends to be empty upwards of 16 hours a day otherwise, and mostly that their children receive breakfast before they go out in the morning; that someone is there if the school has to call and say, "Something has gone wrong with your child," or, "You have to take your child home"; at least someone is there to open the door, someone is there to prepare lunch, someone is there to clean the home, someone is there when the children come back in and, as very often happens, someone is there to make the children their dinner; and when mom and dad arrive home, very often exhausted after a full day, someone is there to say, "Here's what happened during the day. I went out and I did the following chores." In the overwhelming majority of cases, the employers are the ones who can say, "What would we do without you? Our careers couldn't be complete without you."

But the covenant in that is that you have to deliver value for the value that you receive, which is again not an issue with most employers. This is about dealing with the few bad actors. That's what about this bill is really about. That's what this bill does with the stiff penalties that say, "If you're a bad actor, we can get you": for example, a maximum penalty for an individual of \$50,000. Is it really worth it? I don't think it is. It also allows them to say, "You could have jail time if you abuse the trust, if you abuse the compassion, of your caregivers."

Thank you very much. I could go on for a little longer, but I'm a little bit out of time. For all of those who have watched, particularly from the Philippines, [*Remarks in Tagalog*] thank you.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Mississauga—Streetsville gave a very respectable account of the particular persons who work in this field, and I commend him for that. I think in many respects it is kind of shameful that this bill was brought in after the horse had left the barn—the Liberal member Ruby Dhalla's tragic incident.

That being said, I don't want to be totally negative. We would support this whole idea of protecting the people who work in that industry from abuse, as well as injustice toward caregivers of whatever nationality or persuasion. That needs to be on the record for sure as our position.

As such, this bill may be a little late. Maybe parts of it could be strengthened, as we heard from the member from Toronto—Danforth. What I'm suggesting is that the real concern is section 34. I think this has been repeated. I think it's important to read that section, the investigation powers and inspection powers, "An employment standards officer may"—he or she may—"without a

warrant...." This means they could enter your home at any time. Where does this stop? It sounds a bit unbalanced here.

If you look at the bill, it requires an employer of foreign nationals, live-in caregivers, to provide them with a document outlining the rights of the caregiver and the obligations of the employer. This is an important step to ensure that all caregivers—non-Canadian or others—are informed of their rights and the laws that protect them.

There are also other persuasions, where they're not able to withhold anything—their personal effects, like their passport or other things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the remarks by the member from Mississauga—Streetsville. There is no question that the Filipino community, which in fact is one of the larger sources of temporary foreign workers in this country, is one that has a record of organizing, has a record of standing up for itself, has a record indeed internationally of being willing to fight for social justice and fairness.

If you look at the history of the National Farm Workers in the United States, much of the publicity is around the Mexican farm workers, but in fact the Filipino farm workers were organizing in California back in the 1920s, 1930s, 1940s and 1950s. They did an awful lot of the pioneering work that allowed the National Farm Workers to flourish later, which brings me to the point that I wanted to touch on briefly, and that is the fact that much of the focus here is on temporary caregivers, on nannies, but we should also not forget there are many people who come to this country as temporary foreign workers who work in agriculture. At the moment, they are not allowed to organize into a union and that has a huge impact on their well-being, a huge impact on their ability to represent themselves and a huge impact on the kind of wages they can command.

I would say that it's necessary for this government to address not just the temporary foreign workers in nanny situations and long-term-caregiver situations, but to look again at the situation of agricultural workers and make sure that they have treatment with justice and fairness so that their time here is not one of oppression but one when they actually have a chance to build a future for themselves.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: It's a pleasure today to speak in support of Bill 210. How lucky are we Canadian families to be able to hire live-in caregivers? It's very dear to my heart because we recently had to have a live-in caregiver live with my mother, who unfortunately broke her hip last summer. All the family is so thankful for Françoise, this wonderful person who used to be in the health care area, but in her retirement she devoted her time, energy and love to seniors.

I want to support this bill, because we in Ontario have to make sure that live-in caregivers are well respected and well treated. We rely on them to take care of our children, to take care of a loved one in the family. The

least we can do is take care of them and make sure they are well treated. Bill 210 will give confidence to these caregivers who are already in Ontario or want to come from elsewhere to Ontario for, perhaps, a better life. As for us, we welcome them. They are so precious in each of our families. I hope that everybody will vote in support of Bill 210.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I just wanted to reaffirm support of the member from Mississauga–Streetsville for his interest in this initiative. As you know, in his comments he demonstrates that this bill has a very important function, because it gets into a totally new area. As you know, Madam Speaker, we've never done this in Ontario, and there are some pitfalls when going into a new area, because you're dealing essentially with a national program.

The recruiters are stationed right across Canada; they're stationed in a variety of different countries. The one thing I found odd in looking at and examining this issue was that Cyprus seems to be a haven for these recruiters, and they use Cyprus to funnel people into Canada. It sort of becomes a holding station for people—Cyprus, of all places. I just can't fathom why that occurs in Cyprus. Supposedly, if you apply from Cyprus, you can get into Canada easier in this program than if you apply from one of the traditional countries like China or the Philippines etc.

There's a lot of circumventing of a good program taking place. It's not going to be easy, and I don't think the ministry underestimates the resources this will require and the initiative it will take to stay one step ahead of these unscrupulous recruiters. There are some good penalties; there are some good fines; there are some good requirements here. We have to make sure we are one step ahead of the unscrupulous recruiters. Hopefully it's something that my colleague will elucidate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Mississauga–Streetsville has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Earlier in the decade I paid my first visit to Hong Kong. I was walking through a park one day, and I could recognize Tagalog from my rudimentary understanding of the language; there was a group of Filipino nannies who were sitting down and comparing notes on their employers. So, some things seem to be the same all over the world.

A couple of points, in response to the remarks by the members for Durham, Toronto–Danforth, Ottawa–Vanier and Eglinton–Lawrence, whom I thank for their contributions: This bill is not about any particular individual, regardless of how prominent, how wealthy or, in fact, how obscure that individual may be. Bill 210 is about doing the right thing right now.

My colleague from Toronto–Danforth pointed out in his comments something that I'd like to add to. It's part of a process of ensuring that the fairness and equity we take for granted as men and women who have been born and raised in Ontario or in Canada extends to every On-

tarian, whether they've come here recently from another land or whether they're here working in the capacity of a very vulnerable caregiver.

The bill itself is going to the Standing Committee on Social Policy, which is going to allow people who are interested in commenting on the bill to come in and make a deputation if they've got a good comment or idea to offer. That's the point at which the bill tends to get a little bit of tweaking, if it needs any work, or if there are some problems with it, that's the point at which we repair the problems.

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Finally, I want to thank my colleague from Eglinton–Lawrence, who is himself someone who represents a rich, vibrant, multicultural, mid-city riding. Mike Colle gets it. He has done his homework. He is a real credit to that riding and I'm pleased to have him as a colleague.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: First of all, I just want to put a couple of things on the record in regard to this Ruby Dhalla bill and to be clear why we're debating this and what it's all about.

First of all, I want to say up front that this bill deals with trying to give some protection to foreign workers who are coming to work and care for our kids in our own homes, otherwise known as nannies. We know that in the past and currently there have been a number of examples across this country, but particularly here in Ontario, where nannies who have come in from other countries to care for our children have been taken advantage of. We've seen that more recently in the case of Ruby Dhalla. Our good friend Ruby Dhalla, the Liberal member in the federal House of Commons, rightfully so, decided, because of her busy schedule—and I understand that; this is perfectly acceptable—that she needed to have a nanny to care for her children. So, as a federal member of Parliament and a working woman, she decided—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, she didn't have any kids? I'm sorry. Let me retract this. She had a nanny with no kids? Okay. Well, that's a whole other story.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Sorry, I retract. She was taking care of the mother. That's right. I will talk to you in French again; here we go. No, she was taking care of the mother.

Anyway, the point is the same, which is that many people in this country decide that they want to have somebody in order to care for their children, or in this case their mother. What happened in her particular case is that these foreign workers, two of them, were hired, and when they came to Canada to work for Ms. Dhalla and her family, they decided that one of the ways they would make sure that those workers, those two particular nannies, as we call them, would be—how would you say it?—motivated to work for the family is that she would withhold their passports. Clearly that is something that's pretty hard to take, right? A passport is an individual

document that I or you use for identity or to be able to travel abroad. Clearly the reason why people who use foreign workers, otherwise known as nannies, such as Ms. Dhalla had done for her mom, do that is because they are trying to make sure those people don't flee and that they have them under some kind of control. So clearly what's happening in this country is that we have employers, in this case families, who hire nannies—and not everybody does this, obviously. I want to believe that this is a minority of families who do this. I hope this is not the majority of families who have this practice. But clearly there are a number of families who are taking advantage of foreign workers.

So we're seeing in some cases, as in the case of Ms. Dhalla—the current federal Liberal member from her particular riding basically put herself in a position of withdrawing people's passports and asking for services above and beyond what, contractually, they had agreed on when it came to their work for the Dhalla family. This is not a case that is just particular to Ms. Ruby Dhalla. I'm sure this particular case is happening with other families across Ontario where foreign workers are being brought in in order to care for children and they are being made to work above and beyond the contract that they entered into. The way that the employer does that is to use different forms of intimidation in order to force the foreign worker to work for lower wages or to work for longer hours or to do services that otherwise may not be necessarily the services that they were hired for.

Clearly in Canada we have a sense of justice when it comes to working people. In this country, we pride ourselves on at least one that is civil and that says that people who work for a living enter into a contract with an employer. That contract sometimes is written, as in the case of employment contracts or collective agreements, or they are just understandings, where I work for you for so many hours a week, and, "I pay you so many dollars per hour and I expect you to do the following things." Those contracts are normally, we hope, honoured by the employer and by the employee.

But what happens in the case of foreign workers is that they find themselves in a position where often they may be taken advantage of because they don't know the rules of the country they are coming to—in this case, Canada—and the employer decides that they're going to take advantage of a situation because this is a person who may not understand the rules of the land when it comes to labour law. The employer is able to basically enforce some sort of intimidation or power over the worker by doing things such as withdrawing a passport or making innuendoes about the person not being able to emigrate to Canada if they don't get a good reference from the employer they used to work for. Clearly, those kinds of things happen, and that's why this particular bill is here. It's to try to say, "There is nothing wrong with hiring a foreign worker to work as a nanny, but there needs to be some sort of understanding as to what an employer is able to do when it comes to the types of services they want from this particular individual and what they can do

within the law." So this particular law is trying to limit the abuses that may happen on the part of certain employers when it comes to their use of foreign workers, such as nannies—people who work in their homes either as domestics or nannies.

Clearly, this is a bill that I think is needed. Does this bill do everything that we want it to do? Probably not. That's why we have a process called "committee." This bill, right now, is only at second reading, and we're dealing with, I would say, the principle, and the principle is one that I can support. I know that my colleague Madame DiNovo, who is currently our Speaker, spoke to this earlier. She has spoken to our caucus about it and has advised, based on her dealings with people in this field that she has had to deal with, that this bill may not go as far as we want it to, but at least it goes in the right direction. Therefore, we should support it on the basis that it's a step forward.

Does that mean to say, "Hmm, this is a great bill"? Absolutely not. Does this mean to say that this is earth-shattering? Probably not. But it means to say that we are going in the right direction. So the process will be that we will probably support this at second reading. Once the bill, if it should pass second reading—and I imagine it will because at least two of the parties at this point, we know, are going to support it; both the government and the New Democratic caucus. Now it's going to have to go to committee.

That's going to be the test. The test is going to be: To what degree does this bill need to change based on the input that we get from citizens who come before the committee? We have a practice, as whips and as House leaders, that we allow the committees to order up their own business. So the committee that is charged with reviewing this particular bill at the committee level will advertise and let people know that this bill is in committee, and people out there in the public who are interested will be able to contact the clerk's office and say, "I would like to present and talk about my experiences as a domestic worker or as a nanny in order to give input on this particular bill, what I like about it and what I don't like about it, and how I can strengthen this bill," or there may even be some people who are opposed to the bill. I would hope not, but I imagine there might be some out there. They will be able to come before the committee and give their thoughts.

Here's the point that I'm trying to make: The real test of this bill will be at the committee level, because once we've heard from the public, and hopefully we will have heard from enough people, the committee will then have a decision to make as to whether the bill should stand the way it is or be amended. Our experience as legislators, all of us here, is that there's hardly a bill that goes to committee that is not in need of some form of amendment. I just came out of a committee with two bills over the last month or so, the far north planning act and the Mining Amendment Act, and both the government and the opposition members brought all kinds of amendments to the bill, some that were adopted—mostly the government

amendments—and some that were rejected, mostly the opposition amendments. Nonetheless, the point is that bills need to be amended.

We will need to make sure that at the committee level we allow the committee to do its job, so that the committee itself is able to look at this bill, hear what people have to say—the public that wants to make deputations in this committee—and say, “Where does the bill need to be strengthened? What needs to be changed, how does it work and how do we move forward?” Hopefully, we’ll come out of the committee with a bill that all parties can support, and we can come back to third reading and pass this bill at third reading in order to afford some protection to people who, quite frankly, are very often abused by their employers when it comes to what they do for them.

This bill doesn’t cover a whole bunch of other workers, and this is one of the issues we’re going to have to deal with. I know the government might be reluctant to deal with this, but there are all kinds of foreign workers who work in Canada in various types of industries who are needed sometimes on a seasonal level, such as in agriculture. Most of the people who do the harvesting in our fields, on our farms here across Ontario, are no longer young kids looking for work out of high school, going to college or university. Most of those people now are, quite frankly, foreign workers. And I can get into a whole debate about how I think that’s a bit of a travesty—not that I hold anything against foreign workers. But I certainly think that young people working on the farm and doing some harvesting shows good character. I think it helps a young person understand that an education is a good thing and that if you go to school and you work hard and you adopt good work ethics, you can move ahead in the world. I think those first jobs, such as working on a farm, are very valued experiences for a young person. Unfortunately, not as many people do that today as when we were growing up.

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When I was 16 or 17 years old, a lot of kids would end up working out of northern Ontario, on the tobacco farms. They would travel down to the tobacco farms of southern Ontario, and they would pick tobacco for periods of weeks. They would make themselves some decent money, and they would come back to the north and help to pay for their college or university studies or whatever it might be. It was a good experience. Did they work hard? Darn right they worked hard—morning till night. Were they always treated well? Probably not. But it was a good experience; it was a good first job for people to learn.

Here’s the problem: In this particular economy we have now, there are all kinds of workers in that industry, and the majority of those who are doing the harvesting are foreign workers who come here on a seasonal basis. Should we be protecting those workers as well? So far, we’ve not done that. This bill, I know, is not contemplating that, but should it? I think that’s a fair question to put to the committee when this bill goes off to com-

mittee. Is it only nannies who are being taken advantage of, as far as foreign workers? I would argue there’s probably far more than that. Maybe we need to take a more comprehensive look at this particular issue. I think that’ll be interesting.

The other point that I want to raise is the one about the abilities of the inspectors to have access for inspection under this bill. I listened to my good friend Randy Hillier, who is known in this House, in the very short time he’s been here, as an advocate for property rights. I have great respect for Mr. Hillier. Sitting on committee with him, I’ve learned that he’s a pretty astute individual. He raised the point earlier, and at first my gut sort of went, “What are you talking about? This is just more of the same.” But if you start to think about it, it’s quite an interesting point that he raises, and that is, currently under the Employment Standards Act, the Occupational Health and Safety Act and probably under the Ontario Labour Relations Act as well, a Ministry of Labour inspector has the right to go into a workplace to do an inspection and does not need a warrant to do so. They either go in because they’re doing a spot inspection on their own or they’re invited by a worker or somebody who thinks there might be a problem.

The issue is, the inspector does not need a warrant to enter the premises of work to inspect something that might be a contravention of some act, either a health and safety infraction or maybe an infraction under the Employment Standards Act. We’ve done that for good reason, because the workplace normally—not always—is a public place. It’s not a private home. In other words, if I work in a department store, people are allowed to walk in there without any kind of—you hope they’re walking in there without any kind of restrictions. In many workplaces across Ontario, it’s the same.

The issue becomes, should we give Ministry of Labour inspectors the same right of inspection in a person’s private home that also happens to be the workplace of a domestic servant? My initial reaction is to say yes. I think, yes, how else are you going to enforce this act if you don’t give the Ministry of Labour inspector the ability to go in and do that inspection? If you had a system where, under this act, you would have to get a warrant to be able to go in and inspect what you think is an infraction under this act, it might become a bit of a problem, but maybe not. If there was a mechanism for being able to get a warrant so that clearly there is a sense of pause on the part of the Ministry of Labour, that you don’t just go willy-nilly into somebody’s home and say, “All right, I’m the nanny cop, and I’m coming to see if you’re exploiting your nanny”—I can tell you, as a homeowner, I would be mighty upset if somebody came into my house with Ministry of Labour inspectors to inspect my kids who are being cared for by a nanny, should I have a nanny. Our kids are now 33 and 26, so there’s no danger of that. But the point is that I would be, as a parent, somewhat upset if the Ministry of Labour was to walk into my house.

Mr. Hillier raises an interesting point. I think there are two sides to the argument. First, should the Ministry of

Labour have that authority? Normally, I would say yes, because that person is an employee and is working in a workplace. But the problem is the workplace happens to be the person's home, and normally that person is caring for a child.

It's going to be an interesting point that I think we're going to have to take a look at in committee. At this point I would still favour giving that non-warrant access to a Ministry of Labour inspector. That's where I fall at this point. I think the Ministry of Labour has to have that right. But I think Mr. Hillier raises a point that's interesting, and I think we need to take a look at that. Before I pronounce firmly on that, I want to hear what experts have to say about that being an infringement of a person's individual rights. I think not, but maybe it is. I want to leave an open mind on that one. I thought he raised a point at first that was quite interesting.

In closing, all I want to say is, it's a step in the right direction. It's a bill at the end of the day that I think will bring us closer to protecting foreign workers coming into this country. I really do believe that this has to go to committee in order to flesh out the issues. There are a number of issues that I think we need to take a look at. Are there other workers who need to be protected? Is the degree of protection reasonable and adequate? Should you have to have a warrant in order to search a home when it comes to a foreign worker etc? What kinds of practices are acceptable or non-acceptable when it comes to the practices of an employer? I think there are some legitimate questions to be asked, but I think, in the end, the legislation itself is a step in the right direction.

My very last point I would make is that the timing of this bill was, quite frankly, interesting because it really did revolve around Madame Ruby Dhalla. The government—I think, rightfully so—was somewhat taken aback when they saw their federal Liberal colleague Madame Dhalla abuse two foreign workers as a result of actions she took against them over a period of time. Passports were withheld; they were asked to do work that they had not contracted into originally when they came in to care for her mother—and I apologize; at first I said “children”; it's actually “mother.” I recognize that I made an error at the beginning there. But nonetheless, she clearly had infringed on these workers' rights.

I can well understand Mr. McGuinty, another Liberal, in this case at provincial level, somewhat embarrassed by the fact that a federal Liberal colleague had embarrassed and tarnished the Liberal name by getting involved in this particular type of action. So this government wanted to be seen as doing the right thing because we recognize that a large part of the voting bloc in Ontario are people who weren't born here in Canada—a larger and larger number of those—and they wanted to be seen as out in front of this issue.

So let's not kid ourselves. This is not an altruistic approach on the part of the government to say, “Oh, we're the friends of the working people.” If they were friends of the working people, they would have supported anti-scab legislation here two weeks ago. So this is not a

question of being the friends of the working people and certainly not a question of them just being friends of the new-Canadian community. They were trying to do some political damage control to what was the Liberal brand on behalf of what Madame Dhalla had done at the federal level.

With that, I look forward to this bill going into committee, and I look forward to comments from my colleagues in the House as to what I had to say this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I was listening to my colleague from Timmins-James Bay. I have just a couple of clarifications here. I had a private member's bill here before this House a long time before the issues he referred to were even in the press.

On the right of Ministry of Labour inspectors to investigate a work site, well, that has been on the books since Bill Davis introduced that in 1974, and it was reaffirmed by another Tory government in 2000. What it says is that there are many home-based industries where you might have one, two or three people who work in a home-based industry—or employed in a home. The homeowner has the right to deny entry to the inspector. That's always been on the books. So if the inspector comes to your home and you're operating your insurance company out of your home and you've got a secretary working there and she puts in a complaint, you can deny entry to the Ministry of Labour inspector. That has always been there—if it's your home. Okay? It's still in effect. That doesn't change with this act. You have the right to deny entry. Then if a Ministry of Labour inspector wants to get in, he'd have to go back and get a search warrant.

I referred to the case of one of these recruiters who had 16 caregivers living in her basement, sleeping on blankets on the floor. If one of those caregivers sleeping on the floor in the home of the recruiter—how would they ever find out or prove this? They would have to go to the home and inspect it, and obviously the recruiter would probably deny entry. Then they go back and get a search warrant, they go into the home of the recruiter and verify that 16 people—because a lot of the stories have not been believed. Nobody's done any inspections, because they're outside the purview of the provincial labour legislation. Now this brings them into the—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

1710

Mr. John O'Toole: I listened again to the member from Timmins-James Bay, and I think he summed up pretty well the general concerns that I've heard here this afternoon on Bill 210. I would say we would be on the record as supporting this initiative to protect vulnerable workers.

I just want a key consideration here: I think that this particular bill entrenches protections for live-in caregivers and foreign temporary workers. What it doesn't do

is more important, I suppose, for the purpose of debate here. These protections apply only to a small number and a very specific number: that is, the case of nannies. What it fails to recognize or address is the extent to which 91,000 temporary foreign workers in Ontario aren't covered. Why are they only going that far, when in fact they have an opportunity, when they've opened up the legislation, to look at it? I think it's worthy of input from all of those groups, and I would encourage the parliamentary assistant, who is here listening, to take that forward in this process of public hearings.

But I think the member from Timmins–James Bay said all of the things—more specifically, we're very concerned about the civil liberties issue around section 34, which is the warrantless entry provision. I think it's a little heavy-handed, when in fact there are very specific disclosure requirements in the legislation with respect to the rights of the employer as well as the persons who are employed. These must be provided to them in writing, probably in multiple languages, and I think that's fair. I am very supportive of those—the rights to the acknowledgements.

I think if we work together on this, we can improve it and raise the question here of warrantless entry as well as the provision for extending it to other groups that we've heard recently in the media aren't covered and should be covered.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity to listen to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay and what he had to say. I would like to stand up and commend him for having a very good knowledge in talking about some of the problems that have been faced by people who are temporary or part-time workers here in this country.

As members of the House may know from many of my speeches over a long time, I worked for 20 years in the immigration department. I worked for 20 years watching the abuse that took place daily of people who come from other countries merely seeking a better life, and nobody was abused more than those who were temporary workers. Nobody was abused more than the nannies. Nobody was abused more than the agricultural workers who came to this country. To see what happened at the hands of recruiters who would take huge and serious advantage of innocent, poor people who were just trying to make a buck to send home to their families, a buck to send home to their countries where everyone lived in poverty, and where the money that they earned, albeit minimal and minimum wage, wasn't enough—and that people would take advantage.

So I want to, at the outset, commend the government for what they're bringing forward, but also to echo what my colleague from Timmins–James Bay had to say about there having to be safeguards; about the government having to look very seriously at going into people's homes, but at the same time having to go in and put down stringent standards so that people can't get around the law.

I will tell you, some of the laws in this country that are most frequently broken are the laws related to the entire immigration program. The government of Ontario, for too long, has been outside of that program, even though under section 92 of the British North America Act they have equal jurisdiction. It's time to bring that home to protect the most vulnerable people and to make sure that they have rights in this country.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Bob Delaney: I think it's very important that we judge ourselves by the way in which we protect those who can't protect themselves. We've heard one too many sad stories of live-in caregivers who have come to Canada, only to be taken advantage of by unscrupulous employers who shouldn't be allowed to employ them at all and who hitherto had been beyond reach of the law. Bill 210 changes that. Bill 210 comes with teeth. Bill 210 comes with penalties and means to enforce them. That's why Ontario has made a commitment this past spring to bring forward this new legislation specifically to provide these additional protections for live-in caregivers.

I think it's also important that we made clear that we're not going to stand idly by as a government and wait for the proposed legislation to work its way through. We came up with something that's workable right now that we're going to introduce and that all three parties have indicated they will support. So I think we're going to see fairly quick passage of it.

This is an example of how this House has come together, put its natural divisions aside and has said, "There's important work that we have to do as legislators, important work that makes a difference to vulnerable people here in Ontario." All three parties have come together to say, "This is work that we are going to do, this is legislation that we're going to pass and this is a law that's going to be enforced as quickly as we can bring it through committee, give it the thorough treatment that we normally do here, get it passed and have it enacted."

I think that along with the government's outreach, fact sheets and our toll-free hotline, one thing it does send is a very clear signal to employers and caregivers alike that the additional protections that live-in caregivers need are going to be here very quickly.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Timmins–James Bay has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank the members who commented on my short presentation on this bill.

I think it's all been said from the perspective where I'm at. Generally, I think this bill is going in the right direction. I would support it, certainly at second reading in order to get it into committee.

I think we need to take a look at some aspects of the bill. My friend Mr. Prue raised the issue quite succinctly, that some of the most abused people—and the member from Mississauga–Streetsville made the same point—when it comes to the workplace are people who are new

Canadians and often Canadians who are temporary workers. In this country, we need to hold a standard where we say that a person's labour is something that is to be respected. We need to make sure that the people who are working for a living are respected by way of not have their basic rights abused, they're properly remunerated, and they're given some protection under the law. I think Mr. Prue made the point quite effectively.

The test will be in committee. It will go to committee, hopefully, once this bill—if it does pass second reading, and I don't imagine it won't. It will be the real test to hear what people have to say about a number of issues.

I listened to the member from Eglinton—Lawrence, who gave an explanation on the issue of the search without warrant. He's saying, "Don't worry. There are already provisions that that can't happen if it's a person's home." I want to see that. I hear and take him at his word. He's an honourable member. I don't think he would tell me that otherwise, but I now have the member from Eglinton—Lawrence who's saying one thing, and I have the member from wherever it is—Mr. Hillier's riding—saying something quite different.

I want to hear what legislative counsel has to say. I want to hear what the ministry lawyers have to say on that particular issue. I think you do have to have the right to search if you think a person's rights are being violated, but certainly you've got to give some protection to the home.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I'm pleased to have an opportunity to speak for a few moments, anyway, on Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers and in other prescribed employment and to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000.

I want to start off by saying that I was appalled when I heard some of the stories of abuse that came forward in the last few months involving foreign live-in caregivers who were living in conditions where they were in basements or other parts of people's homes, crammed together in small spaces and being forced to do things that were outside of the scope of being a caregiver. I'm not here to point my finger at any particular person or party or name, but the reason I stand and speak today is that I support the fact that we are taking action, and we're taking decisive action. We're bringing forward this bill, a bill that's saying no to the abuse, a bill that is saying, "We want to protect those foreign nationals," a bill that says no to allowing the recruiters to charge a fee to bring these nationals here, a bill that prohibits the homeowner from keeping or withholding a passport or other personal documents from a caregiver, a bill that has strong enforcement, and a bill that has stiff penalties. The bill is not perfect. I don't think any of the bills that come before this Legislature are. That's why, in our parliamentary structure here, we have committees. We've heard the debate so far today. We know that this bill probably will go to committee, and there probably will be amendments to it.

1720

Not too long ago, this House had before it a bill involving the creation of a college for trades and apprentices. I happened to be chairing that committee. It heard many deputations, many interested groups who came forward and spoke to the bill. As a result, we had over 80 amendments proposed, and well over a dozen of them were passed and implemented to change that actual bill. Those amendments didn't come only from the government party, the Liberals; there were good amendments that came from the Conservative Party, and there were good amendments that came from the NDP. We incorporated some of those into the bill as a result of the consultation and the presentations that were made before committee, and I think the same thing will happen here.

We've put forward what we believe is a strong and very good bill, and when it goes to committee, we will hear from the deputants, we will hear from caregivers, we will hear from nannies, we will hear from those who are interested in this bill, and we'll hear their stories. Some of them may have points that are relevant to making changes to this bill and others may not, but in the end, in my experience here, being in this Legislature, I have seen that most bills that have gone to committee usually result in at least some changes, whether they be minor or major, before they come back for third reading.

We're engaged now in second reading debate. It's a good debate, because there are several outstanding issues that we don't know the answers to. Some of these will be worked out in committee, and when we come back hopefully for third reading debate, which we do here, those questions will be answered.

I want to touch briefly on something that I think almost all speakers have spoken to, and that's the civil liberties issue or section 34 of this bill. Section 34 allows or says that—let me just go to it so I have the correct wording. I want to make sure I say the correct thing here.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Don't let that stop you.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: No, no. I want to do this and read the section out properly.

"Investigation and inspection powers

"34(1) An employment standards officer may, without a warrant, enter and inspect any place in order to investigate a possible contravention of this act or to perform an inspection to ensure that this act is being complied with."

Now, I guess the feeling of some members is that you just can't have an inspector go in and decide to run roughshod through someone's home looking for evidence and looking for contraventions to the act. That's clearly not the intention here. Case law in the past—all one has to do is look at case law in the past—makes it clear that nobody is allowed to go in and conduct a fishing investigation or go into a place and just randomly look around.

Here in Ontario, the law as I know it to be is that even with regards to police officers, they can enter a home or premises only in two circumstances. One is called exigent circumstances, and that's when a police officer believes that an offence is occurring or has occurred and that if that police officer were to depart to get a warrant

to search the premises, the evidence would be removed, tampered with or destroyed. In those cases, the police can enter without a warrant.

Secondly, if a police officer has reasonable grounds to believe that someone may be in a situation where they could be harmed or hurt, the police officer can search the premises without a warrant to ensure the safety of the person. That's basically the case law that I understand exists presently. Whether or not this section does more than that remains to be seen, and I think that when we go to committee and we have the lawyers present at committee, when we have the lawyers and research officers present at committee, they'll be able to tell us exactly the scope of this section and whether or not it needs to be amended so that it conforms to the existing laws that are set by our judges and the Supreme Court of Canada. We bring forward statutes, and the courts interpret them. This statute will be interpreted by the courts. We want it to be in harmony with existing case law so that we don't have to have challenges to the section.

I don't see it as being a particularly bad section. We want to make sure that those who do violate—and we heard cases of those who violate, people who bring people into their homes to act as so-called caregivers who end up doing other things. We don't want that to happen. We don't want them in conditions where they're jammed into a room. We don't want them in situations where their health is at risk or they're not doing the job that they thought they were supposed to do or where they face any other type of harm.

The intention here is good. The exact wording will be worked out, and that remains to be done at committee. As far as I can see, it's a balancing act. We want the interests of the individual homeowner always to be protected. We're not saying here that we want to invade homes. On the other hand, you want to make sure that abuse does not happen when someone takes these workers into their home as caregivers.

Another important issue that I wanted to discuss here, because my time is limited and there's a lot that we've talked about on this bill, is the fact that we have brought here a response to something that really was created by the federal government. Again, I'm not pointing a finger at any particular person or individual in the federal government, but there are two laws that exist. Don't forget there are two sections to the Constitution, sections 91 and 92. Section 91 is federal, and 92 is provincial. Section 91 deals with immigration, and we don't deal with immigration. We have a department here, a section, that can help out with immigrants but the general immigration process is handled federally. That was decided a long time ago, back in 1867 when the BNA Act was passed.

The federal government has the responsibility to decide who comes into this country and who doesn't. They administer who comes in through their Human Resources department and through their Immigration Canada department. Those are the two departments. They are the ones that are allowing people to come in and perhaps allowing even those who do the recruiting, those

who charge money to bring in foreign workers, to get away with what they're doing. What they're doing is charging a fee. They're saying, "If you 12 or 15 or 20 caregivers want to come into Canada, I'll get you in, but you've got to pony up \$100 each or \$1,000 each"—whatever the fee is—"and I'll process your papers and get you in through the border."

Ontario doesn't have border guards. The federal government does. They carry federal badges on their sleeves, not Ontario badges. Those badges are there to ensure that the right people come in and that their paperwork is properly in place. When a problem occurs and someone slips in through the system, the federal government should be able to follow up either through their Human Resources department or through Immigration Canada. When somebody is exploiting the system and beginning to bring groups of people in and acting as a recruiter, that should be something the federal government should be aware of.

But we're not going to wait for the federal government to act. We're deciding here to say that no person can charge a fee for doing recruitment. You cannot charge the foreign care workers who come into the country and say, "You know what? I'll bring you in. Pay me money, and I'll get you placed into Mr. Jones's house or Mrs. Smith's house"—whoever's house it's going to be—"to work as a foreign caregiver." We're going to stop that right away.

I think that the focus needs to be put where it belongs: A lot of this is federal. From the newspaper clippings that I've read and from the information that has been put in front of me, hundreds or maybe even thousands of these foreign caregivers have paid up to \$5,000 just in the last decade to come to Canada to care for children or the elderly. These jobs sometimes end up being fake. They arrive here and they're told, "Sorry, there's no job for you," or, "Sorry, we're going to have you do something else." Unfortunately, what are these individuals to do? They leave their country. I know that many come from the Philippines. Others come from other countries, whether it is China or the West Indies or even England. People come over here, and they want to work as foreign caregivers in the live-in caregiver program, and we want to make sure that that system works properly.

1730

This bill is a very strong message to those who would try to abuse the system. Not everyone does, but there are those who do. Those who do abuse the system need to be held accountable for their actions and for doing this. I want to reiterate that the powers we're putting forward here are in compliance with the Constitution Act. They're in compliance with the BNA Act, which I mentioned earlier. The provisions provide appropriate protection for employers while allowing the employment standards officer to determine whether contravention of the act has occurred.

These protections include limiting entry to regular hours of the business, and a requirement to seek a warrant if the business location is a dwelling and the

person does not consent to the entry. That's the way I interpret it. Again, some members of opposition interpret it differently. When we go to committee, we'll work it out. We'll find a solution to it, so that it doesn't have to go before a judge to be determined.

It also requires employment standards officers to show identification. You just can't have someone showing up, knocking on door and saying, "I've got a warrant; I want to come in." They've got to show identification before they come in. When you think about it, the home is a place that—I think Trudeau was the one who said a long time ago that the government has no business in the bedrooms of people's homes.

On the other hand, if you're bringing people into the home and having them work for you, and they're not doing the work they're supposed to do, and they're just not one person or two but they become dozens, then you've got to have some balance, some power to allow an officer to at least come and knock on the door and say, "Hey, is everything okay? Are you sure there's no abuse going on in there?"

It brings to mind the case in United States where, in the backyard of someone's home, a girl flourished and lived for dozens of years. Officers came and officers left, and officers came and officers left. I don't know how many times they came, but this poor girl ended up living her life in the backyard of some—I don't even know what word to use.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Deranged individual.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Deranged individual, my friend from Timmins—James Bay said, who decided to keep this girl in the backyard. She's scarred for life.

We have to have some powers to go into someone's home, and not go away and say, "Do you know what? That's inside the house. We're not going to bother with it. What goes on in there is not our business." It is our business when you've got 12 or 16 or more people stuck in the home doing things they're not supposed to do and living in conditions they're not supposed to live in.

There has to be some balance struck, and that's the key: Where is that line drawn, where is that position taken, where both the interests of the homeowner, because it is sacred—the home is someplace where the maximum amount of privacy should be kept. On the other hand, you have to allow some kind of entry and some kind of action to be taken because of the fact that it becomes a working environment and because you have workers in there.

Again, this bill in front of us is swift action. I commend the ministry and our government for bringing this forward so quickly to act on something that came to our attention as a result of abuses that were going on throughout the province. We didn't sit back and say no.

Another issue I want to address is that some have said, "How come you're only focusing on this particular group and not the others?" Government can't solve every problem. I think everyone knows that. Government cannot solve every problem. We are taking care of a problem here that is an abuse that existed long before we came

into power in 2003 and that would continue to be that way if we didn't take action today. There are other areas, of course, and other people and individuals who have not had their interests 100% protected, but the government cannot solve all problems. It never has, and it never will.

One need only look at what happened back in the early 1960s, not too far from where we are here today, in Hoggs Hollow, where a group of immigrants were digging a tunnel 50 feet underground. Some of these men were 21 years old, just arrived from Europe, and some of them had young children. There were no laws in place at the time regarding employment standards. Seven or eight of them got caught in one corner when digging a tunnel—they got caught where there was a fire and, as a result, they suffocated and died, leaving behind young families and young wives. I've had a chance personally to meet some of these children who never knew their fathers.

As a result of that, the government of the day, back in the early 1960s, enacted employment standards regulations, saying that in the future, you have to have certain protections in place. You just can't send workers that have just come off the boat down into a tunnel and dig without any kind of protection, without any kind of oxygen masks, without any kind of ropes or radios or other types of things that now exist. You would never dream today of sending a worker 50 feet underground to dig a tunnel with only a shovel in their hands and maybe a pair of gloves. That has changed due to legislation.

It's the same here today: The problem existing with the foreign nationals coming here will change as a result of this legislation. You won't see 10 or 16 or 20 workers stuck in someone's home in horrible conditions, not doing what they were told to do, not doing what they expected they were going to do, and being maligned and treated in such a poor way.

Again, we are taking steps here, and they are strong steps. I've only alluded to a few sections of the act—I haven't spoken about other parts as well. But we want to make sure that those who come to this country, because many want to come here—it is the greatest country in the world, without a doubt—are treated well and that they at least are able to do that which they expect to do when they come here and are not hoodwinked by other individuals who take advantage of them because they can be seen as being somewhat vulnerable. When they leave their homeland, they leave their families behind, they leave their parents behind. They come to this country expecting to be a live-in caregiver and end up doing something else instead. That's wrong, that needs to be changed, and that's why this bill is here today.

It'll go into committee. There will be discussions. There will be changes, I'm sure—that's what I think—and it will come back. It appears that the other parties support it. It's not perfect. I don't think any bill we've ever brought forward was perfect. No government has brought a perfect bill forward. But again, it's through dialogue and debate that hopefully we will resolve the outstanding issues.

My time is up, and I thank you, Madam Speaker, for giving me this chance to speak to this very important bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I do appreciate the opportunity to make some comments with respect to various matters spoken to by the member from Scarborough Southwest in his commentary on Bill 210.

I would like to just address the one section that he addressed early on in his speech with respect to section 34 of the act, which is the so-called warrantless entry section. I think that his comments were actually quite thoughtful, and I agree with many of the points that he raised in that respect: that it is a question of balancing rights here with respect to protecting the needs of a group of people who are extremely vulnerable, people who have no opportunity to advocate for themselves and who do need to be protected from situations in which many of them find themselves. But we also need to also bear in mind the issues of the employer and to make sure that any interference with civil liberties is done so very thoughtfully and very carefully. So it is a balancing of those rights and needs, and I hope that we will have the opportunity to explore that further when the matter does get into committee.

1740

I guess, both of us being lawyers by profession, when we talk about the wording in section 34 and when we talk about possible contraventions of the act which allow the employment standards officer to go into premises in order to conduct an inspection, we do make sure that we're careful that it is not a fishing expedition, that people shouldn't be able to get into premises which are also a person's home to make sure that there hasn't been a contravention of the act. I think we need to bear that in mind as we go forward with this, and I would urge all members, when we get this matter into committee—I hope that we will have the benefit of some thoughtful legal analysis as well to give us some advice as to how to appropriately restrict the wording but still be able to achieve the main goals of the act.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rather enjoyed the presentation from the member opposite and hearing his explanations with regard to the issue of search without warrant. He may be right. I have looked at the legislation somewhat and I guess you could interpret it that way, but I think it's incumbent upon us to make sure that in fact we do protect a person's individual property rights so that we don't have inspectors coming in without good cause as far as reason to know.

He also raised, though—and this really hits the issue of an individual's right as far as a person's home being their own castle—the issue of what happened to that poor young woman and her kids who were kept in that person's backyard for all those years. In that case—and I don't pretend to be the expert—the police had suspicions of this guy for other reasons. Neighbours had com-

plained. There was probably probable cause for the police to go in and investigate him. For whatever reason, they didn't. I guess my point is, if the reason they didn't was because they felt they didn't have the authority to go and check, then a travesty was done to that poor young woman and her kids.

I think it raises an interesting point. At what point do we protect a person's property from being able to be visited by the authorities, in this case the crown through the police, and to what point do we protect an individual's rights? Because those two things are very important. I think nobody in this Legislature has a monopoly on saying, "I advocate for citizen rights," and there's nobody on the other side who has a monopoly when it comes to the issue of public safety. So it's an interesting debate, and I think at one point we have to ask ourselves, if there is a possibility that somebody is being abused—that is a really extreme case that he raised, but I thought he raised the point quite effectively.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I also want to participate in the debate on this particular bill, Bill 210.

I think, earlier, one of the members talked about the fact that most households and, we would hope, most recruiters would not be guilty of these kind of travesties, but there's an old adage about how it takes one rotten apple to spoil the barrel. I think that's exactly what's happening here. When we listen to the stories and we read the accounts of what's going on in some situations, it's reminiscent of a very bad movie. It's hard to believe, in a country like Canada and a province like Ontario, that this is even possible, and the fact that we have to legislate to make sure that it isn't happening is, of course, then very important for us to do.

What's happening here—and I've heard accounts of 16 people being forced to sleep in a basement together, of passports being withheld, of people being forced to work, of people not knowing where they're going, where they are going to have to work—is almost akin to slavery, and we need to take action on this.

Certainly it is important, and I absolutely agree, that the federal government—because it is an international issue; it's not just a provincial issue. The federal government, as the member from Scarborough Southwest has said, has a great responsibility, a greater responsibility in this. But I'm particularly proud that all parties are agreeing to the fact that we need to make a statement on this issue as a province and need to move forward to protect the interests of those people who are not acting well and not acting properly on these things.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments.

Mr. Mike Colle: I think we had a very good interchange of legal advice between the member from Whitby and the member from Scarborough Southwest here. I think it's important to get different perspectives on any piece of legislation. It's very helpful because when you

put together a piece of legislation of this nature, it is just incredibly difficult.

I just heard of another case where some poor person paid \$10,000 to come to Canada to work as a caregiver. He gets to Canada, and the employer he's supposed to be matched up with says, "Well, listen, I didn't ask for a male caregiver. I asked for a female caregiver, so I'm not going to hire you." So the poor guy goes back to the recruiter and says, "Can you help me? I paid you \$10,000 to come here. You set me up with the wrong person." Do you know what the recruiter says? "Well, tough luck." So they've got this poor guy's \$10,000. He's here illegally and then on top of it, to make it even worse, he gets a letter from Citizenship and Immigration Canada telling him to come to Ottawa for a hearing because he's here illegally now because he never fulfilled the terms of that contract where the employer said they wanted a female caregiver.

This is the type of utterly disgraceful, systemic abuse that takes place every day in Ontario, every day in British Columbia, every day in Manitoba—right across this country. These money-hungry recruiters are abusing people for tens of thousands of dollars because they're above the law right now. There is no law. There are no enforcement agencies that take any control over these abusers. That's the main thrust of Bill 210, to deal with these rip-off artists who are abusing the poorest and the most vulnerable of all.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Scarborough Southwest has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Thank you, Madam Speaker. I want to thank the member from Whitby—Oshawa, the member from Timmins—James Bay, the member from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex and the member from Eglinton—Lawrence for their comments.

Again, just to respond to some of the comments made, we are engaged in a debate on a bill that is important. We all know that it's important. I think we all support the bill. The question—and it's an interesting one—is: Where do we draw this line, and when do we allow inspectors to go in and make sure that people are not

being treated so horrendously, as the member from Eglinton—Lawrence pointed out? People who end up doing jobs like cleaning or who take on other part-time jobs instead of doing the real job that they're supposed to do when they come here is wrong. How do you stop that from happening? Where do you draw the line in your investigatory role?

Courts tend to behave differently than Legislatures at times. We may pass certain laws, and the courts may say, "No, you can't do that; the home is a place where nobody can go" or, on the other hand, the court may say, "Well, in this situation it's justified for an inspector to enter."

We've put forward, I think, what is a reasonable compromise here in section 34, but again we want to make sure that this thing doesn't get tangled up in the courts. That would be my concern as a member of this Legislature who has an opportunity to discuss and put some input into this bill. It's a strong bill and it's a strong response to a problem that needs to be resolved. So I thank you again for the opportunity to speak to this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

Second reading debate adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Orders of the day.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Madam Speaker, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The government House leader has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I declare that the motion has been carried.

This House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 o'clock.

The House adjourned at 1750.

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Legislative Assembly of Ontario

First Session, 39th Parliament

Assemblée législative de l'Ontario

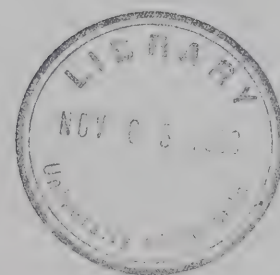
Première session, 39^e législature

Official Report of Debates (Hansard)

Journal des débats (Hansard)

Tuesday 27 October 2009

Mardi 27 octobre 2009



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Honourable Steve Peters

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 27 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 27 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Buddhist prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Mr. Milloy moved third reading of the following bill:

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / *Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Debate?

Hon. John Milloy: It's a pleasure to participate in the third reading of this bill, which would establish Ontario's first college of trades. At the outset, I would like to indicate to the Legislature that I will be sharing my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Oakville. I'd like to publicly thank him for his work on this bill, as well as my former parliamentary assistant, the member from Richmond Hill. As members are aware, there was a shuffle of parliamentary assistants a number of weeks ago. Both of them have done great work in terms of moving this piece of legislation forward.

Just to put this bill in a bit of context, it's not surprising that it's all about the economy. I think everyone here in the Legislature recognizes that that's the focus of most of the work that is happening here at Queen's Park. Of course, when it comes to the economy and preparing Ontario to move forward, we have to make sure that we have one of the most highly educated and highly skilled workforces imaginable. There's no way anymore that we can compete on the basis of low wages or even a low dollar. We have to prepare ourselves. Certainly education at all levels is very much a part of it.

Today, of course, we are talking about education around the skilled trades, which members may be surprised to know represent 10% of our workforce. In fact,

here in the province of Ontario we have more than 150 apprenticeable trades which people can pursue in a variety of areas, not simply in the construction trades which we often think of, but in the automotive sector, the service sector and a whole variety of sectors moving forward.

I think members are aware that there have been numerous reports that have come to light over the past number of years which have predicted that we may see a shortage in the area of skilled trades, and that as Ontario moves forward, for a variety of reasons, partly demographic, but also just the overall demand that's increasing here in our society, we are going to see shortages of skilled trades.

Certainly the government has taken this very seriously. When we came to office in 2003, one of our commitments was to increase the number of apprenticeship registrations by 25%, and I'm pleased to report that in 2003 we had 17,100 individuals coming forward to be apprentices, and as of 2009, we now have 28,000 individuals who came forward this year to be apprentices, to register. In fact, right now in the province of Ontario, we have 60,000 more apprentices than when we took office.

Now, is there more that needs to be done in terms of building this system of apprenticeship and the system of skilled trades? Certainly there is. I think it's worthwhile just to give a bit of context to the bill and how it came about. A number of years ago, my predecessor—the now Attorney General—in his role as Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, was confronted with one issue around the area of skilled training, and that's the issue of compulsory certification. Although many members of this Legislature may understand what compulsory certification is, for those watching this debate on television, I'll explain: It's the system whereby someone is obligated to be fully trained and to receive their qualifications in order to practise a trade. One, of course, can think of the trade of an electrician. You wouldn't want someone coming to your home or business to fix your electrical system who is not a fully certified electrician. That is a compulsory trade. There are a variety of other trades where someone may pursue the apprenticeship option and may write their certificate of qualification, may do that, but in the end they also have the option of pursuing that trade without that qualification.

My predecessor, faced with this issue of compulsory certification, of which trades should be certified and which ones shouldn't—because there's interest in having others join this list of about 20 that are compulsory—

asked a leading labour expert by the name of Mr. Tim Armstrong, a former head of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to take a look at this issue.

What Mr. Armstrong came back with was a very interesting take on the whole apprenticeship system. He said that although there is a need for a system to review compulsory certification, there are a variety of other issues in the training sector: things like ratios, something that we discuss often here, the number of journeypersons who are needed to train an apprentice; things around training standards, how do we set training standards for apprentices; and the issue of diversity, the fact that we don't have enough women and that we don't welcome new Canadians into the trades as readily as we should and that we need work to be done there.

In terms of research, we don't have the research of what's going on in our skilled trades. How are people being trained, and how are people moving through the apprenticeship system and completing, or perhaps not completing, their studies? He looked at the issue of enforcement and said that we don't properly enforce the rules and regulations.

What Mr. Armstrong said was that rather than deal with one of these issues surrounding apprenticeship, the province of Ontario should embark on a very creative and bold idea and establish a college of trades, a self-regulatory body similar to the College of Physicians and Surgeons, the Law Society of Upper Canada and the Ontario College of Teachers, something that came about not that long ago; a self-regulatory body which would bring everyone together. It would bring all those involved in the skilled trades—employers, those who are training apprentices, and obviously we want to hear from apprentices themselves—everyone who is involved, bring them together into a college that would set up mechanisms and set up a structure to examine all these issues, and in a sense, be the real point for apprenticeship training and skills training in the province of Ontario.

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At the core of its mandate, as well as dealing with a whole variety of issues, would be the idea of promoting the skilled trades, particularly among young people, and encouraging them to pursue apprenticeships and to finish their apprenticeships.

The report that Mr. Armstrong brought forward certainly captured the imagination of many here in Queen's Park, but also out in the sector, and it was a very, very welcome report. As a follow-up to that, we asked Mr. Kevin Whitaker, the current chair of the Ontario Labour Relations Board, to go out and consult widely on the idea of a college and what its structure might be. I want to very publicly thank Mr. Whitaker for his work, as well as all the individuals who came forward during that consultation, during Mr. Armstrong's consultation, and subsequently during the committee hearings on this, the input that we received on how we might establish this college. Of course, as a result of this work, as a result of these hearings, we're now at third reading, where we have a bill in front of us which would establish this

structure, which would modernize our apprenticeship system.

I'll just take a minute or two to talk about what this college would look like and how it would function. Its membership would include both certified journeypersons and persons who employ them, or who sponsor or employ apprentices, and thanks to debate here and in the committee, we have welcomed the proposal that apprentices would have a place at the table as well. The college, in setting it up, would ensure balanced representation, including employers and employees. Representatives from the four skilled trades sectors include non-affiliated members representing the public and a representative of our college of applied arts and technology, which is so crucial in terms of apprenticeship.

The proposed governance structure is based on a review of models from other provinces in Canada and other countries, as well as other college models in Ontario, including those regulating health care providers, teachers and early childhood educators. The college would be governed by a board of governors with the chief executive officer leading a dedicated staff to carry out the activities of the college.

Divisional boards—one each for the construction, motive power, industrial and service sectors—would report to the board of governors, advising it on issues relating to their respective sectors. Trade boards representing individual trades or groups of trades in a sector would advise the divisional board on issues relating to its trade. I think this recognizes that some issues affect all trades, while others are particular to and may arise only in one of the four sectors or even in an individual trade.

Appointees to the college may have particular stakeholder constituency backgrounds and would be selected based on that expertise; however, their first duty would be to serve the college and the public interest. Appointments would be balanced, reflecting different workplace realities across the trades, the appropriate proportions of unionized and non-unionized employers and employees, small and large businesses, rural and urban settings. The college of trades would provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical issues affecting the trades sector. I've mentioned some of those, which would include compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios.

We have heard from the industry, we have heard from apprentices, we have heard from all those partners involved in the province of Ontario, about the strength of our apprenticeship system, but we've also heard about the need for further reform. The only way that reform is going to take place is if we pull together all partners, all those involved in the sector, and provide them with a forum to have open and honest debate and to reach a way to move forward on a number of these pressing issues which are so crucial to allowing more young people to come into our skilled trades program.

I'm very, very pleased with Bill 183; it is the result of a great consultation, both before the introduction of the bill, and of course, through discussion at the committee

level and debates here in the Legislature. I think it will go a long way forward in ensuring that we have a very strong skilled trades sector here in the province of Ontario. I urge all members of this Legislature to support this bill as it comes up for third reading.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert Bailey: It gives me great pleasure to rise and speak to third reading debate of Bill 183, the college of trades act. Our party supports anything that will help make sure Ontario has the educated and trained workforce that we will need to compete in the 21st century. We have long believed that the trades are not getting the credit or promotion they deserve as a career that will be able to provide a high-paying job for our young people of the future.

We have constantly called for the government to lower the journeyman-to-apprentice ratio from three to one to one to one. This government has refused to act to date, denying many young people a chance to become qualified tradespeople and denying many businesses the chance to grow and prosper in this modern economy. We were glad, at least, to have the government acknowledge that this new college bill, if passed, will have the ability to set apprenticeship ratios. I would hope that the college would soon set this as a priority.

We are also disappointed that the government passed up the chance to accept any amendments that were brought forward by the opposition that would have, in our opinion, made this bill much better. As Linda Franklin from Colleges Ontario said:

"As many of you will know, the Conference Board of Canada, in a study a couple of years ago, estimated that we will be short 360,000 skilled workers by 2025 and over half a million a few years later. A disproportionate amount of that shortage is in the skilled trades. So it's really critical that in the years ahead we get more women, more underrepresented groups and more groups who traditionally don't see the trades as a viable option for them to consider and choose a skilled trade for their careers."

In terms of labour shortages, those numbers are really frightening. We need to be able to work together with all sectors of this economy to make sure that we are ready to meet this shortage. This will be a huge challenge. Now isn't the time to play partisan politics when it comes to skills training. As an example, Colleges Ontario, which was here last night, had a real concern with making sure that they had a say in developing curriculums at our community colleges. For example, in my riding, Lambton College would then have a seat at this board to make sure that they were listened to. We have not to date got any such commitment from the government.

Many people don't realize that our community colleges play an important part in the delivery of our apprenticeship programs. They were legitimately concerned that they would be called upon to play a new role without any new resources being put behind them. Again, to quote Linda Franklin:

"We think there has to be a strong connection between the regulatory body and the education community. Without that strong connection, we think there are real risks that the training and education of the trades will not be effectively coordinated with the regulatory function. Opportunities to address major issues related to attracting students to the trade could be lost because of the absence of that connection." She went on to say, "As advocates and promoters of the trades on an ongoing basis, our colleges want to ensure that the growth of apprenticeship is not inhibited."

We put forward, as a party, a number of amendments that would have accomplished what Colleges Ontario wanted, and the government rejected these.

The Ontario Home Builders' Association, a group many of us know well, had raised concerns with a cookie-cutter approach to training that may not reflect the actuality. The incoming president of the home builders, Mr. James Bazley, said:

"The current regulatory system governing apprenticeship and training across the province is not perfect. There are numerous challenges we face, such as labour shortages in some trades. These shortages are the result of several factors, including:

"—the negative public perception of a career in construction;

"—interprovincial trade mobility issues;

"—an aging workforce; and

"—the rigid system of apprenticeship training, where there is currently a three-to-one journeyperson-to-apprentice ratio in many of the trades, such as plumbers, electricians and sheet metal workers."

The Home Builders' Association is a fairly forward-thinking organization that wants its members to prosper into the next century. He went on to say:

"Bill 183, which has now passed second reading, represents a potentially serious problem for the provincial residential construction industry. We believe that the current legislation is seriously flawed."

He stated in his deputation to the committee:

"First, it appears that the Ontario College of Trades bureaucracy, as set out in this legislation, is far too politicized to be effective or fair. We have serious concerns about the appointments council, which will be responsible for appointments to the board of governors, the divisional boards, trade boards and the roster of adjudicators. The nine individuals that the Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities appoints to the appointments council will have the ability to appoint members to the boards and will therefore affect the orientation of the entire college structure."

Our party agreed with this position. If the college of trades is set up in this manner, it will be to the detriment of it.

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The second concern that they expressed: "The Ontario College of Trades does not adequately consider the significant differences in labour geography. Outside the few major cities in the province, it is not unusual that

tradespeople do a wide variety of work to ensure their ability" over time "to earn a livelihood. For example, a certified carpenter in Quinte may also do other tasks, such as installing siding or roofing. However, this legislation does not recognize these provincial differences." I don't believe that the government gave this concern the consideration they should have. We all agree that a licensed carpenter in Kenora should have the same training level as one in Toronto, but the government would hear none of that. We think this was a mistake on their part.

It's interesting that the Ontario Home Builders' Association asked the government to conduct a serious economic impact analysis on Bill 183 before it was passed. On our side, we think you should know and be aware of the economic ramifications of any new bill or regulation, so we don't think it is out of line to make this request. But it was again rejected. Our first amendment called for a neutral party to do an economic analysis of this piece of legislation, and the government, in their so-called wisdom, turned it down.

One of the most interesting criticisms of Bill 183 came from a concerned group of tradespeople who have religious objections to joining unions and other organizations and have serious objections to being forced to join this college of trades. These citizens raised very valid concerns in committee and to us individually that, frankly, Ontario in the past has recognized this through many labour laws. For example, you can have a religious objection to joining a union but you may make a donation to a charity that is equal to the dues you would pay to that union. That's recognized in legislation. I don't think it is unreasonable for this same exemption to apply to the college. I understand that the government, through the ministry, made commitments in some way that the new college would deal with a number of these issues through bylaws and regulations, but I would be worried when they are unwilling to put that in writing as of yet. I brought forward an amendment that would have offered the religious protection to this group of workers. Again, the government did not see fit to accept it.

One of the issues that our party raised and submitted through an amendment that the government didn't agree to pass had to do with the democratic makeup of the college board. We had proposed that the board be elected by the members of the college. That is fairly common for other colleges. David McDonald from the Merit OpenShop Contractors Association said, "All colleges in this province are completely democratic. Everybody votes. Everybody votes for how much they're going to pay; everybody participates. This creature of government that the government is creating is completely appointed: The four levels of boards and the panels who are going to adjudicate compulsory trades and ratios are completely appointed by government, yet it's an arm's-length government institution. This is nonsense. It's ridiculous and it is a political powder keg, because you can change the appointment board government" through different changes in government "and you can change the whole structure and essence of the whole college."

We couldn't agree with Mr. McDonald more. We know that the college will be levying a fee on its members; it has admitted so. Of course, we think that this is a tax on tradespeople. But what is worse is that the government can't tell us how much this levy is going to be or how often it will be levied. Will it be just levied against tradespeople or will it be levied against their employers as well? For example, people who belong to a provincially recognized trade now pay a fee, I think it's every three years. There's some indication that this could be yearly, but we have no commitment on that. The government's response is that the college will decide that. This is a college board that is completely appointed by the government, and they will get to decide how big this tax is. I think that's an abdication of responsibility.

Interestingly enough, we are told that the cost of running this new college could be as high as \$40 million. No one seems to be able to tell us where that money is going to come from. Will it come out of existing Ontario community college budgets? I ran this up the flag pole yesterday with members of the college board of governors and representatives here, and I don't think they thought about that before. I asked, "Is that \$40 million going to come out of present community college funding, or is it going to be new funding that the government, in this deficit, probably will have a hard time coming up with?" No one had the answers to that. Will it be funded by a levy on tradespeople? No one seems to know that as well.

This bill raises so many questions that I'm very disappointed that they have used time allocation to try and get it through this House so quickly. This follows a pattern of this government. They will let the Legislature debate for hours issues that are meaningless to most Ontarians, but as soon as the opposition raises an issue that is serious, they cut off debate. This is the party that promised they wouldn't use time allocation; they have now used it on virtually every bill that has been sent to committee.

My party doesn't like this move to where we pass enabling legislation and then leave the details to be decided later. The old saw that the devil is in the details leaves many people with trepidation.

This government seems to have an addiction to this kind of behaviour. I would have liked to see the government stand up and say how much these fees were going to be for this new college, and not leave it up to someone else.

In closing, my party has some very serious reservations about this piece of legislation. We don't believe the government has come forward with enough of the details on how this new college will work. There are questions about the college that need to be answered, questions about apprenticeship ratios that need to be answered. The question of how big the tax on our tradespeople will be needs to be answered.

For all of those reasons, our party is against this bill, but we recognize, at the end of the day, with the government's majority, that it will pass, and we hope that it will

be successful in making Ontario a leader in skills training.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Thank you, Madam Speaker. It's an honour to be able to speak to this bill this morning. As you may well be aware, our critic, Rosario Marchese, is also scheduled to speak this morning, so my remarks will be relatively brief.

The intent of this bill is to set up a college of trades to regulate the trades, to give them more say on how apprenticeship programs are run, and to set up a regulatory framework that people will understand clearly, one that we in our party would hope would advance the cause of ensuring that tradespeople are properly trained, that apprentices have a clear road to go forward to become journeypersons, and that there is, in fact, a method in place to ensure that we have skilled people who do the work that's so critical to the functioning of our society.

I have to say that, at the same time as we're discussing this college of trades, Bill 175 is coming forward to enhance labour mobility between the provinces. It strikes me that these bills are at cross-purposes. On the one hand, we today are debating a college of trades piece of legislation that will allow the trades to set standards, that will be setting out a road for people to move through training and become fully qualified. At the same time, we have another piece of legislation that will allow people from across Canada who may not have the level of training that we want this bill to provide us with to simply come and operate as though they've had the training that's required in Ontario. I'm not saying that we have the highest level of training—we may. There already is a national program, the red seal program, that strives to have a standard level of qualification right across Ontario.

So I have to say that for all the words from the minister about the need for a college and about certification, training and regulation so that we have capable people doing this work, I have tremendous concern that, at the same time, the government is bringing forward legislation that will undermine everything that they expect this college to do. That is a tremendous problem.

With regard to the bill itself and its contents, the NDP supports an arm's-length body to deal with approvals of industry recommendations regarding new compulsory trades, journeyperson ratios, curriculum and other matters. It's not clear, and I look forward to hearing more debate, whether the new structure will be truly industry-driven or whether the new college's structure, which we see as cumbersome, will merely substitute one bureaucratic barrier for another.

It's not clear what the province's apprentices and journeypersons will get from their membership fee in this college, particularly if the government goes ahead and passes this bill on labour mobility, which in fact would undermine the standard-setting that this college is supposed to be given responsibility for.

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If you look at the overview of the apprenticeship situation, Ontario's apprenticeship system provides future skills for industry and the economy and supports the provinces to better compete in the global economy by ensuring that an adequate supply of skilled workers is available. It goes without saying: If you're going to have electrical equipment, if you're going to have an electricity infrastructure, if you're going to have buildings that stay up when they're put up, then you want to make sure that you have capable and trained people actually doing that work.

Apprenticeship training itself is cost-effective, and it's an efficient method of training for industry; 90% to 95% of apprenticeship training is done on the job. The success of an apprenticeship training program is dependent on its unique combination of workplace and academic education.

The time-based workplace component of apprenticeship training is essential in that the apprentice must have an adequate period to learn from the journeyperson. In-school training must support what is taught in the workplace.

I have to say—and we've had this debate before in this House—that ensuring that you have the right ratio of journeypersons to apprentices is critical. There are people who have made the argument in the past, and I expect will make the argument in the future, that that ratio has to be radically altered so that far more apprentices can come on stream. But the reality is that if you have too many apprentices per journeyperson, those apprentices in the end become floor sweepers and coffee-bringers rather than people who are getting one-on-one training on skills that can have a huge impact on the viability of a product or a building, or on the safety of a building.

So my hope—our hope—is that with the way this act is written and the way, ultimately, the regulations are produced, we will have a college that will be able to make sure that those standards are protected.

We think that apprenticeship training must be more widely used as a mechanism to promote entry for workers new to the labour force, re-entry for workers returning to the labour force and transition for those already in the labour force.

Apprenticeship training must be promoted more effectively in the school system in order to provide opportunities for students not going on to post-secondary education in an era of high youth unemployment.

Apprenticeship training must be accessible to all. Marketing and education initiatives must be expanded to ensure that existing female, aboriginal and visible-minority employees are recognized as potential apprentices by current and future employers.

Under the Mike Harris government, the apprenticeship system in Ontario was split in two by placing industrial trades in the new act and leaving construction trades under the old Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. These actions deregulated the system and shifted the focus from apprenticeship as an employment relationship

to apprenticeship as an education and training relationship. It removed the enforcement of the regulatory provisions that regulated ratios and wage rates, and it removed entry levels and duration from the legislation.

The NDP believes that skill sets must not replace whole trades. While there must be flexibility to recognize genuine new trades—

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I don't believe we have a quorum.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is a quorum present?

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: You're up, Peter. Talk.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I understand. I'm free to proceed?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Compulsory certification must be significantly expanded after re-establishing whole trades. Employer-established non-regulated designer trades must come under the regulation through the established apprenticeship training programs. With that as a starting point, over time, the NDP believes that the entire system should move toward compulsory certification for most trades. Compulsory certification will ensure increased flexibility and mobility as well as higher standards, higher skill levels, higher quality and increased confidence in the apprenticeship system. Compulsory certification will also help ensure public safety and consumer protection.

I will wrap up my comments here and leave the balance of my time to our critic, Mr. Marchese.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you very much.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): We're in rotation.

The member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning and support third reading of the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act, 2009. As members will know, if the act is passed, it's going to establish the college of trades as a regulatory college, and that's going to help to modernize the province's apprenticeship and skilled trades system, something we all know is really necessary.

What the bill is about, for those who are watching at home, is promoting the trades; it's about helping the skilled trades sector succeed; and, more importantly, it's about providing more opportunity for all Ontarians—all important goals for stakeholders in apprenticeship and the skilled trades and for the province, and something that's worthy of this House's support. We've come up with a model we believe will help us achieve the goals, and it has come up after careful consideration. We've

conducted thorough research on the bill. The legislation stands on a very firm foundation of discussion with industry, with partners, participants in the skilled trades and the apprenticeship training system.

Joining us today in the members' gallery, for example, are Ken Wragge from Northridge Electric, who followed the hearings through, and Alex Lolula, formerly of the Ontario Building Trades and now with the IBEW, who followed the hearings through as well. During that process we were able to hear from a variety of stakeholders who expressed a very strong interest in the bill and brought us very valuable input and advice as to what we should include in the bill.

What we also did was examine a number of other models in other jurisdictions to see what those other jurisdictions are using, and we were examining the current state of trades and apprenticeship training in Ontario, how it's evolved over the years, and we investigated areas where Ontario can improve the process. We consulted very widely with stakeholders.

Let's just go back a little bit and see where this legislation came from and how this proposed legislation came about. That's going to help reinforce why it's important. I hope the bill receives the full support of this House.

The previous Minister for Training, Colleges and Universities, who is the current Attorney General, took the first step towards addressing a number of issues that were identified at that point in time as issues that were holding the skilled trades back. Minister Bentley called on Tim Armstrong, who we all know is a respected public policy adviser and legal counsel. He's an author and he's a recipient of the Order of Ontario. We tasked him with reviewing compulsory certification in the skilled trades. He was asked to look at this issue with particular reference to the impact on health and safety, on apprenticeship registration and completion rates, on consumer protection and on the economic impact and other relevant factors that may influence decisions. He was asked to recommend a framework for dealing with and advising on applications for compulsory trade status, something that has been talked about a lot. He also conducted broad stakeholder consultations and engaged external advisers and labour market economists as well as federal government agencies.

He reported back to us in May 2008. What he said was, he suggested that we couldn't adequately address compulsory certification without looking at all other aspects of the system. According to Mr. Armstrong, there was "substantial potential to improve and enhance the standing and the effectiveness of the apprenticeship trades and their continued, strengthened contribution to the growth of the Ontario economy."

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Out of all the recommendations he made, the most significant recommendation was to consult with the stakeholders regarding the objective of establishing a new, all-trades government institution, which has come to be known as the college of trades. He offered structural suggestions for consideration in establishing the

proposed college, and what these included—and which we discussed in some depth at committee—are a board of governors with a balanced membership, and a certification role that, together with the college name, would enhance the prestige and the status of the trades. He also wanted us to include the capacity to deal with the needs of each individual sector and the ability to establish expert panels that should consider decisions on ratios, for example, and certification; and he wanted us to discuss and consider a role for the college in enforcement and complaints on these issues.

In September 2009 we announced our intent to move forward with Mr. Armstrong's recommendations, announcing that we intended to introduce legislation that, if passed, would establish the college of trades. We appointed Mr. Kevin Whitaker as the implementation adviser. He was asked to make recommendations to the government on the college's proposed governance structure, scope and mandate. Like Mr. Armstrong before him, Mr. Whitaker also developed his recommendations after wide consultations. He met with employer and employee organizations, with organizations that provide apprenticeship training and with experts from among the more than 150 trades in the province of Ontario today. He reviewed submissions from the public and interested parties, he held meetings and regional public consultations and he got a wide array of input and feedback. He worked with the government in conjunction with a committee of representatives of all government ministries that were involved in the apprenticeship and skilled trades system.

The recommendations he brought forward that came from this process are reflected in the bill we have before us today, the Ontario College of Trades and Apprenticeship Act.

The proposed legislation retains important elements to replace the existing Apprenticeship and Certification Act and the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, standardizing governance for the sector. Under the act, the college would have a duty to serve and protect the public interest in carrying out all its objects and functions. The college membership would include certified journeypersons and persons who employ them or who sponsor or employ apprentices. Thanks to the discussion in the Legislature, at the committee level as well, and the advice that we received from a number of stakeholders in committee, membership has also been expanded to include apprentices in this province.

The college's balanced approach to governance considers the needs of employers, employees, apprentices and other stakeholders in the process. It's going to ensure balanced representation comes from employers and employees, representatives from the industrial, service, construction and motive power sectors, and it includes non-affiliated members who are representing the public.

Thanks to the discussions we also had in committee, the representation that's envisioned under the act has been expanded to now include a representative of the colleges of applied arts and technology. It includes a

board of governors, four divisional boards and individual trade boards. This recognizes that some issues affect all trades, while other issues are particular just to certain trades and may arise in only one of the four divisions or to individual trades.

Appointees to the college may have a particular stakeholder constituency background and they're going to be selected based on that expertise. However, the first duty of those appointed is to serve the college and, most importantly, the public interest. Nevertheless, as in any normal decision-making process, there are going to be differences of opinion that will arise, so the governance structure is being designed to prevent any deadlock on decisions.

College appointees will reflect the diversity in Ontario society and the college's membership. College appointments would be made with attention to groups that have been historically underrepresented in the trades and are long overdue changes. They will target francophones, aboriginal Ontarians, women, visible minorities and persons dealing with disabilities. It's going to provide an open, systematic and transparent process to deal with critical issues affecting the trades sector. Those that have been talked about include compulsory certification and apprenticeship ratios. It's going to be difficult to achieve consensus on these issues, but this is the way to make it with this existing framework.

This is a huge step ahead for the skilled trades in the province of Ontario and for the employees in this province. It's worthy of the support of all members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: Bill 183: Having worked in industry myself for 30 years, I am very interested.

I suspect that in all things there are balance and relationship issues. The bill was introduced in May 2009 and it strikes me as—I have a lot of respect for the unions, skilled trades specifically. They're very organized and have their own educational functions and trade standards functions—and to an extent the CAW. They definitely have their place and I wouldn't want to be on the record as saying otherwise.

When I read this bill, though, I'm a bit suspicious about it because it has some inherent conflicts, unfortunately. I'll just go through a few things here.

It's sort of a monopolization of who can do what. This is in an innovative economy and a fast-moving global economy. If you look at books like *The World Is Flat*, talking about globalization, we need to know that we're in a different type of economy than we were, say, 20 or 30 years ago. If you look at the large manufacturing sectors—Stelco, Inco, Dofasco, General Motors—they're pretty well in some stress right now, if not completely out of business. Having worked there 30 years, I owe most of what I have to those years, and to my family as well. So I'm thinking that this isn't quite the right thing to do. I think the standards are important.

I'm just going to read some of the preamble here: "The bill sets out a scheme for the governance of the practice of trades in Ontario through the establishment of the Ontario College of Trades and through revising the current framework of apprenticeship training and certification contained in the Apprenticeship and Certification Act...."

It goes on to say, "Part II prohibits a person from engaging in the practice of a trade designated under the act...." Does that preclude me from wiring anything or fixing my plumbing? Not yet.

Employing a journeyman in those trades, or sponsoring or employing an apprentice: We've talked for ages here about the apprenticeship ratio issue. Let's look at best practices globally, internationally, and make sure that our young people have opportunities here in Ontario, if not in Canada.

There's the inter-jurisdictional issue now, the AIT. That's another problem, where we're trying to harmonize the standards across the provinces. I look at not just the skilled trades group but at health care, for instance. Opticians in Alberta take about four months' training; opticians in Ontario take about four years' training. They're not the same. Let's change the standards. But the colleges that train the opticians here in Ontario want the four years of tuition, not the four months of tuition like Alberta. I hope the standards will be no lower in Ontario if we agree to bring them in here. Our people are spending four years to learn the skill that's being taught somewhere else.

Some of the other professions—my son's fiancée was rejected by the Ontario College of Teachers. She didn't get into the training at Western or wherever, and she went to the United States. So we need to be a lot more versatile.

I'm concerned. If I just read through here, the next part: "Part III contains general provisions relating to the objects, organization and administration of the college and its board of governors. This part includes provisions respecting the relationship between the college and the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities. The board will be appointed by a council...." It sounds to me like a lot of administration here.

How is it happening today? This is all new.

By the way, it's mandatory membership, probably \$200 or \$300 a person. That's a tax on jobs. For me to belong to the trade and now I've got to pay \$300 or whatever to belong to this new college, that's a tax on a job; I don't know what for, personally.

Then they go into this whole thing of the discipline committee. Well, wait a minute here. I recognize the college of doctors—we have a couple of physicians here this morning. The colleges of professions usually is the disciplinary body; they set the standards and the discipline for non-compliance. If a union is running it, their job primarily in the workplace, as I recall, is to guard against unnecessary discipline. How is discipline going to work in this? I think there's a conflict of interest in the very design of the role of this.

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I think the best example of that is the college of teachers. When the Royal Commission on Learning talked about professionalizing the profession of educators, they formed a college, much like the college of nurses. The definition of a college or a profession is it's self-regulating, like doctors, nurses, teachers, veterinarians, opticians and optometrists. Anyway, the majority of votes on the college of teachers is actually the heads of the union. I'm not opposed—there's a structure in all things, so it's not a negative aspersion. What it's saying is, it's a conflict of their interest. To protect the workers and the workers rights is the role, and I respect that. I dealt with it for 30 years.

There are sections of this bill that are simply redundant. If I look at the whole first section—there are over 100 sections to this bill. Look, I've gone through this thing. There's so much red tape in here it's unbelievable. There's a college to elect a college and then there's a disciplinary committee and then there are provisions for procedures for relief from sanctions. And then there is an ability here that permits appeals to the Divisional Courts for somebody who is wrongfully dismissed or something like that. I am not opposed to standards—and high standards—in the trades. I'm proud to say that we have the red seal program across Canada. I hope it's going to be co-operative with other inter-jurisdictional commerce issues.

On the one hand, the goals of this, establishing and enshrining the standards of quality and expertise in the trades, is laudable; I agree with that. This is duplication. It's a tax on jobs. In my view, it's probably, unfortunately—and I remember, when we were discussing apprenticeship review back when we were in government. I remember meeting Pat Dillon, a fine gentleman. It would be my advice here that if Premier McGuinty would appoint him from the Working Families Coalition as the head of the college, that would complete the circle that I'm talking about. It's a payoff by Premier McGuinty for the last election and that's the fact—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Mr. Colle, now he knows—

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order: That is not parliamentary language, impugning motive, and should be ruled out of order. You should be objecting to that kind of speech in this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I'd ask the member to withdraw.

Mr. John O'Toole: I am very reluctant to withdraw, but I will withdraw because the chief government whip couldn't even keep enough members in this House—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Would you continue the debate? Time is—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Yes.

Further debate? The member from Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: New Democrats are going to support this bill.

But I also want to add that I'm not quite sure why the government has decided to time-allocate this particular issue. We normally have third reading debate, and we usually take a day, two or three if our members want to speak to the bill. I am not quite sure why the government was in a hurry to move a motion to time-allocate this bill so all we get is 20 minutes of third reading debate and the issue is dead.

Mr. David Zimmer: That's enough time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We have 10 minutes to debate this bill that has taken us many—still have enough time?

Mr. David Zimmer: Oh, we've got a lot of time; 10 minutes is enough.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good friend from Willowdale says we have a lot of time. It's easy for the governing member to say we have a lot of time because he doesn't want the opposition to have much time to debate the bill.

Even though I'm supporting it, and our party is supporting it, I just don't quite understand why you time-allocated this bill. I don't get it. I needed to make that point, member from Willowdale. I'm not quite sure what you're not understanding about the issue, but we normally debate in full on third reading. If the member from Willowdale wanted to speak, he should have gotten up and should have forced his own government members to give him time to speak, give him the level of his blah, blah on the left flank over here.

I wanted to tell you that we support this bill. It's not a perfect bill, but we believe it moves in the right direction.

New Democrats have been critical of this government for quite some time. We believe they have mishandled the issue of apprenticeship for years. We have been critical of this ministry and the minister in terms of how they've handled the apprenticeship program from the very beginning. They have given away money for programs they call apprenticeship programs which, in my view and in the view of many in the trades, were not real apprenticeship programs. All they were obsessed with and still are obsessed with are numbers, i.e., how many register in a program, whether it's worthwhile or not, versus how many complete the program. It never bothered the government too much that many of these people going into these trades and some not-so-great trades were not completing the program. They were obsessed with registration, and never for one moment did they obsess about why they were not completing the programs. It has been a dismal failure from the get-go.

The second part of it is the Second Career program, which this minister has been talking about and bragging about for quite some time. They say that New Democrats didn't support the program. What we said about this ministry, this government, is that from the very beginning, the Second Career program was restricted so as to make sure that few people were able to apply and get into the program. In fact, in the early six months of the program only 1,100 people had applied to get into the Second Career program. We made fun of this govern-

ment because they were bragging about how great the program was, yet only 1,000 people had, within a six-month to one-year period, if I recall, applied to get into their program. Then, with the criticism of New Democrats, they stretched the criteria so as to allow people to apply. Then, lo and behold, 21,000 people apply to the program. Why? Because they made the application process less restrictive, and as a result—

Hon. John Milloy: You were mocking it way after the changes were made.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I mocked your ministry, Minister. I mocked your ministry and your government for their failure to do the right thing with unemployed people. We have unemployment at 10%, and it's going to remain so for the next two years. High unemployment, when people desperately need access to these Second Career programs in order to have a second opportunity to get a job, and what does this government do? It closes the criteria once again, puts a cap on the program and says, "We can't do it anymore," and in the same breath it says, "We need to continue, but we need to make it sustainable." What does that mean? It means getting it back to the first six months, where fewer people will be able to apply and get into the program. That's what "sustainable" means in the words of the Liberal government. The same words applied to the Conservatives in the past as well.

I've been critical of this government in terms of what it has done. The member from Oakville, you will agree that I've been critical of you guys, and I have been nice inasmuch as this initiative is one of the better initiatives you introduced in order to make apprenticeship programs work better for people.

We believe that there's a desperate need to make this more efficient, and we believe that this college of trades will move us in that direction. We had many, many deputations from which and from whom I learned a lot, based on the presentations made by the Ontario Federation of Labour, the Coalition of Compulsory Trades in Construction, and OPSEU, which made a good recommendation that was rejected by this government. Their recommendation was that, "given the fact that Bill 183 ... retains ministerial responsibility for apprenticeship, that there be no reduction in either the current number of positions or hours worked to administer and enforce apprenticeship agreements.... We further recommend that all employees hired under Bill 183 as employees of a trades governance structure be considered OPS members with full successor rights, seniority and pension benefits as those currently working on apprenticeship...." That was a good recommendation they made that was rejected by this government.

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The Coalition of Compulsory Trades in Construction said that we should move ahead with the compulsory trades and wait and leave the voluntary trades for another day. Let's get it right, they said, and then have the volunteer trades apply for membership at a later time. It was a useful suggestion, rejected by this government. But the fact that good suggestions were made by various bodies doesn't mean that we're going to not support this bill.

The Ontario Federation of Labour said that we should separate the trades into two parts: the authentic trades and those that are not authentic. By “authentic,” they meant those trades that are compulsory, those trades that require an apprenticeship program for two, three, four and, in some cases, five years; those are the authentic trades. In those trades we trust, by means of and by way of the skills that they acquire after a long apprenticeship program, versus the skill-set trades, as evidenced by the Apprenticeship and Certification Act versus the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act. What the Apprenticeship and Certification Act does is reduce those skills into skill sets. In my view and the view of the Ontario Federation of Labour, those skill sets mean that they have less time on the job to train. It means that they get less than the two years, less than the three years, less than the four years that are required. It was a useful suggestion to separate the occupations as defined by what I said: skill sets versus the authentic trades, which are compulsory and ought to be compulsory. Useful suggestions made by various bodies were rejected.

Another suggestion that I’ve made for years now the member from Oakville will remember. He says, “We have gone all over the world to review what they have done.” I’m not sure how well you did that, by the way, because I don’t think you looked very closely at what Ireland was doing and what France was doing. By the way, I don’t think you looked very closely as to what it is that Quebec is doing, just around the corner. It’s only a—what is it?—six-hour drive to get to Montreal. It wouldn’t take that long to get to Quebec if you had to go by plane or if you had to ride a car, and you would learn something from it.

What have they done? Modelled on Ireland and France, they have obliged corporations whose payroll is \$1 million or more to put 1% of their dollars into training. Why is that good? Why is it important? Because it obliges the corporations to do the training that they should be doing to help out not just its own workers, but to help out with the lack of trades that they’re going to desperately need in some of these professions, in some of the occupations, in the next 10 or 15 years.

Corporations are leaving the job of training to the government alone. It’s just wrong in my mind. They have a responsibility to do training, and they should be doing it. Instead, they attack governments for not training the workers as adequately as they should be to get them into their workplaces. You get sick and tired of the government having to pay the full load as opposed to the corporations paying their fair share.

That was a suggestion, member from Oakville, that I had made quite a while ago with a bill that I introduced in this Legislature that you and many Liberals over there defeated and many Tories—all the Tories—defeated, of course. So there are useful suggestions to make it better.

You took one or two of my suggestions, and I thank you for that. You didn’t do it for me; you did it for yourself because you made the bill better. What you did in one of the amendments was say that he trades can make recommendations, the trade boards can make

recommendations to the divisional boards, and the divisional boards have to, within a reasonable time frame, respond. Thank you. It was good. More could have been done. That’s okay.

We would have loved to have had the full hour to debate this bill so that I could say just a little more, and you didn’t allow me to do that. You cut the debate, and I don’t know why you did that. I regret that you did that, but I will be supporting this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Pursuant to the order of the House dated October 6, 2009, I am now required to put the question.

Mr. Milloy has moved third reading of Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades.

Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

A recorded vote being required, it will be deferred until after question period today.

Third reading vote deferred.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Orders of the day.

Hon. John Milloy: No further business, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1005 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On behalf of our colleague from Mississauga–Brampton South, I’d like to introduce three of her constituents, who will be joining us this morning: Monique, Giordan and Kieran Kendal.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Nepean–Carleton and page Jeremy Pagé, we’d like to welcome his mother, Nicé Pagé, his father, Rick, and his brother Tyler to the galleries today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

On behalf of the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and page Bethany Ricker, we would like to welcome her mother, May Lynne Emiry, and her sister Gemma Ricker to the galleries as well today. Welcome to Queen’s Park.

Seated in the Speaker’s gallery today is my nephew Nicholas Peters, my brother Joe Peters and some of his work colleagues: Joe Rajab, Carolyn Young, Catherine McEachern, Sarah Penny and Mark Cottril. Welcome to Queen’s Park, all.

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Leeds–Grenville on a point of order.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you very much, Speaker. I apologize for the delay. I thought there would be more introductions, as is usually the case.

I want to reference a number of standing orders which I believe, and I would pose to you—perhaps did not violate the strict word or the broader definition of the specific standing orders but could be interpreted as definitely breaching the spirit of a number of standing orders in this place.

I'll reference 35(a), "Ministerial Statements," matters of which the House should be informed; 40(b), the distribution of materials to opposition members; standing order 48, the rights of the minority; and standing 54 with respect to notice. I had a very limited opportunity to review the standing orders this morning, and I'm sure that others would also be applicable in this situation.

This is an issue that you have spoken to, and a number of your predecessors have as well, and that's essentially dealing with an announcement made today by the Premier that specifically directs the allocation of public funds—significant public funds—in an announcement made outside of this chamber.

In referencing a number of rulings that you have made, Speaker—March 31, 2008, where you referenced a previous Speaker and quoted him at length, I'll use the quote that was in your ruling: "administrative discourtesies do give rise to 'a valid grievance of which the government should take serious note.'" In that ruling, you expressed your personal disapproval of this kind of activity, and we very much support that and appreciate your comments and your ruling.

This year, in a ruling related to a point of order raised by the member for Oshawa, who dealt with an issue, you also made reference to this in terms of the limitations placed upon the Speaker in terms of dealing with this kind of issue.

But I think that this goes well beyond the bounds. We're looking at a government that is facing a record deficit in this province. We're talking about an expenditure that could exceed \$1 billion of public funds, yet the government does not see it appropriate to make that kind of a significant spending announcement in this place.

We are very much concerned, as well—we can't talk about the absence of specific ministers to deal with these issues, so I will not get into that issue, but again, this is an issue showing disrespect for the opposition members in this place. We express very serious concern and I want that to be on the record with respect to this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The government House leader on the same point of order.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I'm actually unclear as to what the member was objecting to. He listed four standing orders that he felt in some way had been violated but gave no reason why. I am actually unclear as to what announcement he was referring to, because I don't think he referred to one. But I would remind the member opposite that, in fact, his government was the one that introduced an entire budget off-site.

So if they are accusing us of something, I'm unclear what it may be. I would like a little further direction before he casts aspersions on the way our government is doing business without giving any detail or any actual violations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thank the member from Leeds—Grenville for his point of order and, as well, the government House leader. I will take this matter under advisement and provide a ruling at a subsequent date.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Premier, when you were asked about your lack of a plan in light of your record-breaking \$25-billion deficit, you said, "Don't just do something—stand there, think, and then do something."

Has the Premier finally emerged from his thinking place and come up with a plan to clean up the incredible mess he's made?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this. I think what Ontarians are asking of us is to be thoughtful in terms of the approach that we bring to balancing the budget. My honourable colleague advocates, let's say, a particular approach which we reject. He thinks that we should cut everything yesterday.

We want to do two things. We want to both chart a course towards a balanced budget and at the same time protect those services that Ontarians rely on, like their health care and their education. And there's something else they are asking us to do, which is to ensure that we also make the kinds of investments that will help grow our economy; hence the reason I was so proud to make an announcement just a few moments ago that we are going to proceed with full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds in the province of Ontario. That's the foundation for a highly skilled and educated workforce.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You know, all taxpayers are seeing with the lack of a plan is a Premier who has become paralyzed with his own economic mess and a second-term rot setting in. I would have expected the Premier would have had some action, not to wait for six months. I thought at one time Premier McGuinty might actually exceed expectations and come up with a plan.

Premier, one year ago the global crisis hit, but you have yet to bring forward a single item of restraint to prevent the deficit from growing even bigger still. Every hour that you stand in place thinking, \$2.8 million is added to our debt. We expect to see a Premier who will lead and not be frozen in place. When will you emerge from your thinking place?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just not going to get the positive support that I've been looking for, I guess, Speaker. I'll have to look elsewhere for that.

Again, what did Ontarians expect of us at the outset of the recession? I think they expected us to do the kinds of things that we have done. They've asked us to find a way to support the auto sector; hence the billions of dollars of

support we put there. They asked us to provide retraining opportunities for people caught up in the economic dislocation who have lost their jobs though no fault of their own, so we've invested in that as well. Those are the kinds of initiatives that my honourable colleague would not and does not support. Those are the kinds of things that we have done in the face of the recession.

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Now, given the fact that we've made our deficit public—it is significant; there's no doubt about that—we will begin to work together in an earnest way to find ways to chart a course towards a balanced budget without compromising public services and at the same time making investments in a stronger economy.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: It is clear that the second-term rot is setting in deep across the McGuinty government.

Last week, the Premier was asked about steering the economy out of this mess and his failure to have any kind of a plan to pull out of it. The Premier said, "You folks pay a lot closer attention to this than do our families. By and large, they have been focused on their own economic challenges." Premier, the economic challenges families are worried about is your failure to create any private sector jobs since your budget and the \$13,500 in new debt put on each and every household. This province needs a new direction. When will it take Ontario's version of Mr. Dithers to bring forward a plan?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I always appreciate the enthusiasm, but I'm just not sure there is a lot of light accompanying the heat.

I'll tell you about some of the programs that we have put in place: In addition to our Second Career program, which is to help moms and dads in particular who have lost their jobs and help them get back on their feet through a one-of-a-kind program in Canada, we're also moving ahead with tax cuts to help our businesses grow stronger. We're going to move ahead with tax cuts for our families to help ease the pain which they experience, particularly as a result of lost savings through the economic recession. We're also going to move ahead with our harmonized sales tax, which my honourable colleague knows is the right thing to do, but he shrinks from embracing his responsibility in this particular regard to help us build a stronger economy.

The fact is, we have a plan; my friend says we don't. We do; it's just not one that he embraces.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: I ask the Premier, who ordered officials to obstruct the Auditor General's investigation of the McGuinty government's billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think my honourable colleague ought to know better in this particular regard. I think the deputy minister has had an opportunity to speak to this, I think the auditor has had an opportunity to speak

to this, and I think my colleague knows the truth: No such order was given by anyone.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Come on, Premier—you think the Auditor General made this up? Do you think this was just a coincidence? You have, for six months, tried to stone-wall, to delay, to dither, to try to cover for your mess and your Deputy Premier, your right hand man. Now you're telling me the Auditor General—this is his fantasy? Give me a break.

Premier, you've had three weeks to get to the bottom of this interference with the Auditor General's investigation of the Ministry of Health and your eHealth boondoggle. Will you stand in your place and tell us today who gave that order? Was it you? Was it one of your ministers?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In addition to a lot of heat and not very much light, my honourable colleague is given to flights of fancy. The auditor has had an opportunity to speak to this. The deputy minister has had an opportunity to speak to this. The secretary of cabinet has had an opportunity to lend direction to future activities on the part of people working within the bureaucracy.

Let me just take this opportunity, once again, to reassure the auditor and all the other officers of this government that we will always, in each and every instance, provide all the co-operation that they need to complete their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: You can see the evidence of the second-term rot: a Premier who would rather sweep this sordid tale under the carpet than give answers that taxpayers deserve.

Premier, if they blocked it, what are the consequences? Who pays the price for those misdeeds? But I think you know the answer and that's why you're trying to cover it up, and if you're not willing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Withdrawn. I think the Premier doesn't want to tell the Legislative Assembly exactly what happened—what was the role of his office, what was the role of his minister's office and what was the role of his Deputy Premier—because you know as well as I that public servants would not put their careers on the line for no reason whatsoever. Premier, did that order actually come from you or your office?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I've already answered that. My colleague is engaged in a partisan pursuit, and I understand that, but it's not the way we operate on this side of the House.

If you take a look at what we've done, in fact, in terms of increasing transparency and accountability, we've taken a number of measures. Most recently, we've said that we want to bring Cancer Care Ontario within the ambit of the freedom-of-information legislation. We took government agencies which had been removed from the sunshine list by my colleagues opposite when they were

in government and brought them back into that; I'm talking about OPG and Hydro One. We've given new authority to the auditor to take a look at our schools, our universities and our municipalities when it comes to finding out exactly what's going on in there. The fact of the matter is, we have a strong record of increasing accountability and transparency for the benefit of Ontarians.

CORPORATE TAX

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Way back, way back in 2008, the Premier rejected a call by the big banks for a lower corporate tax rate, and I'm going to quote him: "Getting into deficit is no problem, getting out is the challenge. So we want to make sure that we don't get in so deep that it becomes just extraordinarily difficult to get ourselves out of that predicament."

Ontario has a \$25-billion deficit, yet the Premier is insisting on a corporate tax giveaway. Why did he say no to the banks 10 months ago but is saying yes today?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm pleased to take the question from my honourable colleague. She's talking about our last budget. That was a budget that was supported by poverty groups, it was a budget that was supported by food banks, and it was a budget that was supported by business groups and others. It struck the right balance in terms of recognizing where we find ourselves at this point in our history and in terms of ensuring that we have competitive levels of corporate taxation. Also, my colleague hasn't had the opportunity to speak to this very much, but we accelerated the rate at which we are going to invest in the Ontario child benefit to help families that are struggling, living in poverty, whether they're the working poor or those who don't have jobs. That's all part of a budget which we think is thoughtful and essential for the times.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier's priorities are pretty clear: Instead of making it easier to find a job, he's introducing a job-killing tax that makes life less affordable. Instead of making sure that health care is there for families that need it, he looks for ways to cut services. Instead of trying to bring the deficit under control, he gives a \$4.5-billion corporate tax giveaway to the very companies that do not need it.

How could the Premier's unbalanced priorities be so out of whack with those of everyday Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I would argue that it's not our budget that is unbalanced; it's my honourable colleague's perspective. I know that my honourable colleague does, in fact, support our Second Career program, and I wish she would say that. I know that she does support our Ontario child benefit, and I wish she would say that. I know that she does support investing in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds as the foundation for a highly skilled, educated and competitive workforce, and I wish she would say that. I also know

that she does support the fact that the low-income earners in Ontario will be paying the lowest levels of personal income taxes in all of Canada. She supports that, and I just wish she would stand up and say that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: You know, people really are looking for a balanced, thoughtful approach from the government. Instead, though, it seems that the fix is in: for some, a multi-billion-dollar corporate tax give away; for the rest of us, a new tax, a job-killing one, on everything from hydro to your coffee in the morning; for some, \$1 million a day in high-priced consultant fees; for the rest of us, cuts to local hospitals. And the Premier says more is on the way. Is the Premier being reckless or is he simply out of touch?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've always brought balance as a government and we will continue to do that. When it comes to the matter of addressing the deficit, we will continue to hear on a regular basis from the party on the left that we need to spend more, ever more and lots more, and we should pretend that the deficit is not part of our reality. From the party on the far right, we will continue to hear every day that we need to cut and hack and slash in an unthinking way. What Ontarians want is balance. They want us to recognize our fiscal reality. They want us to protect their public services. They want us to invest in a stronger economy for tomorrow. They want us to protect their health and education. They want us to deliver their public services in a more efficient manner. That's the task that we have before us, that's the task that we really take on and that's the challenge which the Minister of Finance is taking on as he prepares his budget.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I certainly wouldn't choose \$5 billion in corporate tax giveaways, I can tell the Premier that.

My next question is to the Premier. Families across the province expect their government to make quality health a top priority. Instead, they see their government cutting hospital beds, firing nurses and investing scarce public dollars in consulting contracts. If the Premier can find half a billion dollars to invest in corporate tax giveaways, a million dollars a day in consulting fees, why are Ontario families losing health care services they so desperately need?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: They're not. They're not losing services. The fact of the matter is that year over year we continue to invest more in our health care services. More than that, more than just simply putting in more money, we have more doctors, we have more nurses, we have more home care, we have shorter wait times, we have more drugs being funded, more surgeries, more technologies. The fact of the matter is, we have invested significantly more. I think the health care budget

is up by about a third. Since 2003, the cost of living has gone up by about 11%. So we've gone up about three times the cost of living. We're proud of that and we're proud of the results that we continue to get for Ontarians when it comes to better quality health care.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The problem is, we all know where that health care money went; right? It went to a billion dollars at eHealth, it went to consulting contracts that were untendered. In Dalton McGuinty's Ontario, in fact, consultants are doing fine and they get lucrative contracts to recommend cuts to services. Seniors and their families are told the funding to meet their needs simply isn't available, yet this government gave McKinsey and Co. a \$750,000 sole-source contract to recommend cuts. The McGuinty government needs to provide some real transparency here. Will the Premier table all of the details of the McKinsey consulting report on the Ontario drug benefit plan, including the total cost and all of the recommendations?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague knows that we invited McKinsey to come in and tell us a bit more about our new program that we had in place. It was a program designed to find savings by reducing the cost of the drugs that we've been buying for Ontarians. We're still buying those drugs; we want to pay less for those drugs. So far, we have found \$700 million in savings. All of that has gone towards purchasing more drugs. That's the whole purpose of the program: to find a way for us, as buyers, to pay less for the drugs so that we can take the savings and put them into purchasing more drugs for Ontarians. That's what we're doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is asking people to simply accept his word, but we keep seeing health dollars—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would ask the Minister of Finance to withdraw that comment, please.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Withdraw.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is asking people to accept his word, but we keep seeing health dollars spent by the millions in secret deals with well-connected insiders. The McKinsey report is just the latest example. The government hid the report when it was supposed to be released with everything else. They denied it actually even existed. And now the government refuses to share the details with the people of this province. How can the Premier expect to be believed by the people that he's going to be protecting our health care when he's constantly—constantly—keeping the facts about health care spending from the people of this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: The secret McKinsey report can be found online. Again, to be very clear, we put in place a new program that was designed to help us drive down the cost of certain drugs. We wanted to make sure that the program was doing well and accomplishing its

intended objective. We asked McKinsey to review that for us, and they have done that.

So far, we've generated about \$700 million worth of savings. All of that has been reinvested in purchasing more drugs for the people of Ontario. I think this is exactly the kind of approach that Ontarians want us to take. They want us to get the best possible value for the money they invest in health care and specifically the money they're investing in drugs. That's what we continue to do for Ontarians.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Norm Miller: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Casino Niagara's lease expires in March. Initially, the McGuinty government was ready to do another untendered deal to renew the lease, but when the casino's landlord learned the McGuinty Liberals were thinking of putting the lease to competitive bids, they retained the Premier's former director of issues management, Bob Lopinski. Now there's no competitive process. Why is there one set of rules for the Premier's ex-staff and other Liberal friends and another set of rules for the rest of us?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The rules apply to everybody. I know that the firm that Mr. Lopinski is a member of also employs Charles Harnick and Don Cousens. I also know that member and his party renewed the very same lease in 2002 in the absence of a process.

It's unfortunate that my colleague opposite can't get his facts straight, but we are pleased to deal with firms that employ former Conservative cabinet ministers, former Conservative MPPs and also support a policy that in fact his government did, and that was to renew the lease, sole-sourced, in 2002.

Mr. Norm Miller: Minister, you may recall Bob Lopinski was the lobbyist who was helping the Maid of the Mist get a \$25-million untendered contract renewed. In his lobbyist registration form, Lopinski admits he has a "success fee" that pays him a bonus if Canadian Niagara Hotels is awarded the multi-million-dollar lease for Casino Niagara.

The Premier said this sort of practice would stop once he introduced new rules earlier this year. How much will Bob Lopinski get if his client is awarded the new contract?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Obviously, having been deflected on his first question, he chooses to go in another direction.

Let me remind him, the lease renewal has been subject to a report from the Integrity Commissioner. We followed her advice. We're aware that New York state has already renewed their lease with the Maid of the Mist for 40 years.

Interestingly, there is a contact in this House. I understand Mr. Hudak's own principal secretary was a consultant for the Niagara Parks Commission and helped author their communication strategy on the Maid of the Mist lease renewal.

I'd rather talk about getting people back to work than slinging mud irrevocably. This government is going to work hard to get people back to work, and I'd suggest the member opposite and his colleagues back there get their facts straight, look at their own record, and they'll see that this government's a darned sight better than that government ever was on the economy and on ethics.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order, please.

New question.

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JOB CREATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

The member from Kenora—Rainy River.

Mr. Howard Hampton: A question to the Premier: During six years of the McGuinty government, Ontario has lost 350,000 manufacturing jobs, unemployment is the highest it has been in 15 years, and this government's own forecast shows that Ontario's unemployment rate is not likely to drop below 9% until after 2011. To make matters worse, the McGuinty government is promoting a new tax, the HST, which will have a further negative effect on jobs. Either the Premier doesn't care about jobs or he has no idea how to create them. Which is it, Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know my honourable colleague understands that Ontario is the second-largest manufacturing centre in North America—we come in just after California. I think he understands, as well, that the global recession has a disproportionately negative impact on manufacturing.

What I hope and wish and continue to pray that he will also understand is that manufacturers in particular will benefit from a harmonized sales tax. That's why they've come out overwhelmingly in favour of a harmonized sales tax. They want to reduce the cost of their imports, they want to reduce the cost of their exports, they want to become more competitive in a globalized economy, they want to be able to retain existing employees and they want to be able to hire more.

That's why we're moving ahead with the harmonized sales tax on behalf of manufacturers and so many other sectors, and I wish my colleague would understand that and support that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm well aware that corporations will always support a corporate tax cut, but there are other studies that indicate this is going to have a negative effect on Ontario's jobs situation.

Instead of a job-killing tax, Ontario could implement an aggressive buy-Ontario policy that would promote local jobs. This government hasn't done that. Instead of a job-killing tax, this government could implement a reasonable industrial hydro rate that would help sustain

jobs in the forest sector, the mining sector and in manufacturing generally. This government hasn't done that.

As the official unemployment rate nears 10%, we know the unofficial rate is actually much higher. With more families struggling to pay the bills at the end of the month, when are we going to actually see something from the McGuinty government that helps to sustain jobs?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, it's not a case of us not having a plan; it's a case of my colleague opposite not supporting our plan, and I understand that.

With respect to buy-Ontario provisions, I know my honourable colleague would understand that it's important that we continue to find a way to strike a balance. We want to be as aggressive as we can to promote Ontario jobs using the money that we spend through the government, but at the same time we happen to be mindful of our obligation to the international community. We've got to be respectful of the reality that we enjoy today, that we live in a globalized economy.

We have been very aggressive in particular on our Green Energy Act, so much so—my colleagues may not be keeping up on this score—that there have now been concerns raised in the European Union community and discussion of some kind of a countervailing measure to be taken against Ontario.

We will hold firm. We will do everything we can to protect our jobs, but we'll be mindful as well of our globalized reality.

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. This morning, the Ontario Hospital Association put out a press release to propose that the government extend the province's Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act to the hospital sector. The association's president, Tom Closson, said, "While Ontario's hospitals are extraordinarily transparent and accountable, their justifiable pride in past achievements should not prevent us from moving to become even more transparent as a sector tomorrow."

Minister, Ontarians want to have confidence that their hospitals are using tax dollars wisely. Ontario's hospitals say they are willing to open themselves up to additional scrutiny. So I ask the minister, is the OHA's proposal something that this government will consider?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I want to thank my colleague for the question.

I am very happy to be able to reiterate just how important transparency and accountability are, not only in our agencies and boards but right across government.

I know Ontarians want to be assured that every dime we spend on health care goes to improving health care. When I first became Minister of Health, that was one of the priorities I discussed in this House. I'm very pleased to know that the OHA shares our goals, and I welcome their desire to fall under our FOI legislation.

As Tom Closson said, "Ontario's hospitals value their communities' confidence and trust...." So do we. That's why I'm going to be working with the OHA and Ontario's hospitals, as well as the Office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner. Together, we're going to look at what steps we can take next to make sure that our hospitals are even more open and accountable than they are today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I think Ontarians across the province are going to benefit from more openness in the hospital sector. After all, with \$15.5 billion in annual funding, hospitals take up a significant share of the province's health care budget. Ontarians want to know how this money is being spent. They expect their government to do everything it can to ensure that Ontarians' valuable tax dollars are being used wisely, especially in health care.

I ask the Minister of Health: What else is this government doing to increase accountability? I know Ontarians want you to do more.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Again, thank you to the member.

I'm very pleased to tell the House that, as of January 1, 2010, Cancer Care Ontario will fall under Ontario's freedom-of-information act. It's an important step our government is taking to ensure that the agency is more accountable to Ontario taxpayers.

Since 2003, our government has added more than 80 organizations to the list of those that can be subject to FOI requests, and we made these changes to ensure that we're more accountable to Ontarians.

We've also expanded the powers of the Auditor General. We've opened up our hospitals, our schools, our colleges, our universities and our crown corporations to value-for-money audits. By April 1, 2010, expenses for OPS senior management, for cabinet ministers, for political staff and for senior executives at Ontario's 22 largest agencies will be posted online.

Moving forward, we're going to continue to look at ways that we can do more to make—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

AGENCY SPENDING

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: My question is for the Minister of Tourism, again referencing Bob Lopinski, Premier McGuinty's former political aide turned well-connected lobbyist. The last we heard, he hadn't quite earned his success fee for the Maid of the Mist deal.

Last week, Minister Smith said the 25-year untendered lease with the Maid of the Mist still had to go to cabinet. There have been three cabinet meetings, apparently, since that comment was made—perhaps it wasn't last week. Three cabinet meetings, I understand; that's what we're advised.

Can the minister tell us, did cabinet ignore the Premier's edict against untendered deals for his friend and former staffer Mr. Lopinski?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I appreciate the question. As I've told the House before, our government and its agencies are committed to openness, transparency and accountability.

The Niagara Parks Commission has reviewed its decision on the lease, as we asked them to, in light of the audit that was undertaken and the governance review. They've made a recommendation to the ministry, and the ministry is doing its due diligence.

As I've advised the member on the opposite side previously, I'm not going to speculate on how cabinet will decide on this issue. It will go forward in due course. I appreciate the question and the ongoing interest in this matter.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You would think the decision to open the lease to competitive bidding would be a no-brainer given the red ink that's spewing out of the parks commission and the historic deficit that this government is running. The point of competitive bids is to get maximum value for the taxpayers of the province of Ontario.

There's another potential bidder, we're told, willing to submit a tender worth at least \$100 million more than the deal that Bob Lopinski is lobbying for. That additional revenue, Minister, you have to admit, would come in handy given your record deficit.

If the McGuinty Liberals aren't looking for a way to help a former insider get his success fee, then why haven't they announced a competitive process for this bid? What's the delay? What's happening here?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I would just remind the member opposite, as did the Minister of Finance earlier to another question, that the Counsel Public Affairs firm also houses former Conservative MPP Don Cousens and, of course, the former Attorney General of the Conservative government, Charles Harnick, which the member for Leeds—Grenville may have personal issues with, but I don't think he would cast aspersions on the entire firm.

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I would also remind the member that the leader of the official opposition's principal secretary formerly worked as an adviser to the Niagara Parks Commission and has helped in crafting a communications strategy around the renewal of the Maid of the Mist lease. So I'm not really sure where the member opposite is coming from on this, but I can assure him that the ministry is reviewing the decision that was made by the commission and it will be going forward to cabinet in due course.

SERVICES EN FRANÇAIS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. Mercredi dernier, le commissaire aux services en français a publié son rapport accablant sur votre gestion des services en français. Le commissaire y dénonce une attitude minimaliste et rappelle que l'offre des services en français est une obligation en vertu de la loi, laissant entendre que vous la bafouez.

Au lieu de reconnaître l'urgence de la situation, votre gouvernement s'est auto-félicité d'un travail bâclé en matière de services en français.

Ma question est simple : pourquoi le gouvernement a-t-il volontairement laissé passer une occasion en or de motiver les ministères à passer aux actes afin d'améliorer l'offre des services en français?

L'hon. Dalton McGuinty: Je passe cette question à la ministre des Affaires francophones.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Premièrement, je voudrais remercier la membre du Nouveau Parti démocratique pour son intérêt dans les affaires francophones.

Je voudrais remercier premièrement le commissaire aux services en français; il a fait un rapport très intéressant. Comme l'an dernier, nous avons pris ses recommandations très au sérieux et nous avançons dans la mise en œuvre de ces recommandations.

Cette fois-ci, j'ai demandé à l'Office des affaires francophones encore une fois de revoir ses recommandations, et j'ai déjà commencé à parler à mes collègues qui sont mentionnés dans les recommandations. Nous trouvons que les recommandations sont très bonnes et vont aider à l'avancement des services en français, non seulement ici à Queen's Park, mais aussi dans tout l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: S'auto-féliciter pour un rapport accablant, ce n'est pas ça qui va faire avancer les choses. Cela me laisse sous-entendre soit que vous n'avez pas lu le rapport, soit que vous prenez les francophones qui l'ont lu pour des valises, puis vous ne reconnaissez pas l'urgence d'agir pour corriger l'état qui était donné dans ce rapport, ou, pire encore, que vous avez lu le rapport, puis vous vous fichez éperdument des opportunités que vous aviez pour faire bouger les choses et pour faire avancer les services aux francophones. Laquelle des trois options les francophones devraient-ils retenir?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Je pense que les francophones en Ontario sont les bons juges de ce que ce gouvernement-ci a fait pour l'avancement des francophones.

Si j'étais à la place de M^{me} Gélinas, je regarderais plutôt ce que leur parti a fait en ce qui concerne les francophones lorsqu'ils étaient au pouvoir. Il y a eu des coupures de budget, il y a eu des réductions de personnel, tandis que nous, nous avons augmenté le budget des Affaires francophones, nous avons créé le poste de commissaire, nous avons investi d'une façon majeure dans l'éducation, dans les soins de santé—

L'hon. Jim Watson: TFO.

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: —l'indépendance de TFO. Je pourrais continuer. Je pense que les francophones seront les juges. Je veux terminer par l'Hôpital Montfort, qui me tient beaucoup à cœur; cela a été le plus grand investissement dans la francophonie dans l'histoire de l'Ontario, et cela a été fait par notre gouvernement.

TAXATION

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Minister, as governments face the global eco-

nomie recession, understandably, job creation has increasingly become a major focus. Good jobs will help pull people out of poverty and allow them to provide for their families. Maintaining existing employment and creating new employment will go a long way to help those in need, but we all understand that not everyone will be able to get back to work overnight. Some people, including many residents of my riding of St. Paul's, are relying on the government and the non-profit sector for support.

The HST has been mainly communicated as a job-creating tool and there are serious concerns surrounding the effect of the HST on those who are already facing tough choices on a limited income. Minister, will the HST place an additional burden on low-income Ontarians, forcing them to pay more when they can least afford it?

Hon. Mr. Wilkinson: I want to thank my new colleague for the question, and I would refer him to a quote from John Stapleton, from the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, who says in regard to our budget, "This is a budget that favours low-income people, and the working poor most of all because when you look at all the benefits, it is clear that the working poor and those with low wages are going to be better off as a result of the budget measures."

What are those measures? Number one, we are going to cut the personal income tax rate on the first \$37,000 worth of income, and we will have the lowest personal income tax rate in this country. Some 90,000 Ontarians will not be paying personal income tax as a result of our reforms. Particularly for those who are struggling, we are more than doubling the GST rebate they're receiving now. We're adding an additional \$260 for every child and adult in a family, and that is designed specifically to ensure that our people at the lowest ends are in a better position than they are today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Helping to get people back to work is the number one action we can do to assist low-income Ontarians. Income tax exemptions, tax credits and transitional cheques will help struggling families as we move forward with a new form of taxation. Targeted exemptions will greatly assist families in the short term and over the long term. These exemptions include children's clothing, infant and child car seats, books, groceries, rent and condo fees, prescription drugs and medical devices.

Minister, because of their importance to families, many social advocates would like as much clarification as possible when looking at these exemptions. What has been the reaction to the HST in the poverty and low-income sector?

Hon. Mr. Wilkinson: I say to the member that many, many have weighed in after taking a look at the comprehensive nature of our tax reform. They have seen through the facile analysis of just seeing part of our tax reform and are looking at the entire package. What they see is that we're putting people in a better position

starting next year. We are cutting personal income taxes on January 1. The HST does not come in until July 1.

Let's talk in real terms. If a family receives an additional \$260 per member, what is \$260? It represents an 8% tax on \$3,250 worth of purchases. For most low-income families, a single mom with two children, it is a substantial amount of money, because we want to make sure that they have more money in their pockets. Yes, as a society we are going to modernize our tax system, but we will not leave those people with the least advantage disadvantaged by our reforms. That's exactly why we're moving and reforming our income tax system—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VICTIMS OF CRIME

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is to the Attorney General. The Attorney General has repeatedly said that he takes the experience of the Marshall family in St. Catharines very seriously. We recently received a copy of a letter sent by John Ayre, assistant Deputy Attorney General, criminal law division, to Jody McIntosh, a resident of St. Catharines who wrote to express her concerns about this case. Mr. Ayre stated that the crown withdrew the charge in the Marshall case because there was no reasonable prospect of conviction. But Mr. Essert, the Niagara crown attorney, told Ms. Marshall he wasn't sure about that point and said that the charges were withdrawn in order to avoid recidivism.

Attorney General, there is serious confusion about this issue that needs to be clarified. Can you tell us why the charges were really dropped in the Marshall case?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We take any violation of one's personal sense of security, their privacy or their dignity very, very seriously at all levels. The crown did review the charge, the facts and the circumstances. The crown, in a very extensive letter to the family, indicated the reasons. The member also now has an additional correspondence, I understand, from the chief prosecutor.

If there is further evidence, if there is other evidence, I would ask everyone to bring it to the attention of the police because I know that they will investigate, as they always do, very thoroughly. But the reasons for withdrawing the charge have been addressed in terms of the fact that it was not appropriate to proceed in the circumstances.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: In fact, this issue hasn't been addressed. On September 29 of this year, the Attorney General said in response to my question that this issue has already been dealt with in court. But in fact, it was never dealt with in court in terms of either a plea or a trial and a resolution. Despite a videotaped, properly obtained confession, the charges against the accused were withdrawn with some vague suggestion that there was perhaps no reasonable prospect of conviction. In fact, as the Attorney General knows, if there was no reasonable prospect of conviction on those charges, what should

have happened was a further discussion with the police with a view to laying other charges. That was simply not done in this case. Instead, the charges simply vanished. The charge was withdrawn with no record and no penalty.

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Attorney General, you're asking the Marshall family, her family and the people of Ontario to trust that justice has been done, yet no one knows what happened in this case. Will you please tell us?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As the member, I believe, knows and should know, the charge actually was dealt with in court. It was dealt with in court by being withdrawn; that is being dealt with in court. It was withdrawn. It was withdrawn after a very thorough review by the crown of the evidence that had been provided as a result of the police investigation.

I know it's challenging in circumstances such as this, but the crown is duty bound to take the evidence and the charges laid and determine the appropriateness of proceeding. The crown did that in this case. The charge was withdrawn, and I know if there's any further information or evidence or incident, it should be directed to the police for their review and consideration.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Since the Port Colborne emergency room shut down this summer, the Welland hospital has seen a 20% increase in patients. The Welland hospital was already struggling with capacity issues and now a code gridlock has been declared.

Niagara Falls is also feeling the strain of Fort Erie's emergency room closure. The fact is, emergency rooms were closed without proper planning.

How are the remaining ERs in Niagara region supposed to cope with an influx of new patients when they're already at capacity?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do know that there is, understandably, anxiety in a community whenever there are changes made, especially in the way our health care is delivered because we so value our health care system. But I want to stress that our government's commitment to strengthening and improving health care in the Niagara region is as strong and stronger than it's ever been. I'm confident that the LHIN board continues to act in the best interests of the people of Niagara, making decisions that will ensure the sustainability of the health care system in Niagara.

I think it's important that we actually acknowledge the significant investments that have been made in the region. They've seen an increase of over 43%; \$88 million more is going into that region for health care than there was when we took office.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think that this minister needs to acknowledge the grave situation that we are in, in the Niagara region. The Niagara Region Public Health unit estimates that in the event of a pandemic, ER visits are

going to soar to close to 700 per day and hospitalizations are going to reach close to 2,000. Yet this government has closed more than 100 hospital beds in this region. It's a recipe for disaster.

How can the government find a million dollars a day for consultants and contracts that are untendered and not fund the desperately needed emergency rooms in Port Colborne and Fort Erie?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do know that, as we are seeing now the impact of the H1N1 pandemic here in Ontario, there will be added pressure on hospital emergency rooms. It is too early right now to anticipate what the actual numbers will be, but we will see more demand on our emergency rooms across the province. That is one reason why it is very, very important that everyone in Ontario get the H1N1 vaccination as soon as it is available. It is the right thing to do, not just for an individual; it's also the right thing to do for your family members, for those around you, for those you work with. If we all do our part, take that H1N1 vaccine, it will have the impact of reducing some of the pressures on our emergency rooms.

DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: My question is for the Attorney General, and I ask the question with over 20 years' experience in community safety and crime prevention. There are things that we know. We know victims of domestic violence are largely women and children. We know that women suffering from domestic abuse face challenges when seeking relief. And we know this government offers services in the immediate aftermath, throughout the criminal justice process, as women rebuild their lives. We know a restraining order is available to prevent a partner or a former partner from harming children physically or emotionally. Yet the lack of a means by which to enforce breaches of restraining orders can weaken the effectiveness of the order and fail to provide women the protection they need. Can the Attorney General tell this House what the government is doing to strengthen enforcement of restraining orders to help protect women and children from domestic violence?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: The member from Kitchener-Conestoga raises a very important question. I know members of this House have spoken to it on many occasions for over a decade, and members of the legal community, whether judges or lawyers, victims' rights advocates and others, have said we need to strengthen restraining orders. That's why this government introduced and last May passed legislation, and on October 15 the new strengthened restraining order protections came into force. What do they provide? First, a breach of an order can be enforced as a violation of the Criminal Code—much greater strength. Secondly, there is a plain language guide. Third, there is a uniform order so the police will have the same order around the province, providing for better protections for women and children, all those who now live in fear.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: I'm proud to be part of a government that's moving in the right direction to give women better access to restraining orders to help protect them and their children. Many of the vulnerable individuals who benefit from the protection of enhanced restraining orders also come in contact with the family justice system at some point. We know that when Ontarians become engaged with Family Court, they're often at a difficult time in their lives, with family breakdown or distress. The stress and cost of Family Court proceedings can sometimes be overwhelming, especially at these difficult times. Could the Attorney General please inform this House about how this government is making the family justice system effective, accessible and affordable for these vulnerable Ontarians?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Again, the member, no doubt as a result of her advocacy and familiarity with the issues, raises some very important points. Two things: First, in the legislation that we passed, there were some additional items. There is required financial disclosure yearly for those who are paying support, so there's no more hide-and-seek of assets. That will make it easier for those receiving support to get what they should be receiving. Secondly, there are new rules with respect to the division of what is often the most important asset: pensions. It used to be that families involved in a family dispute spent thousands of dollars and a lot of time arguing over the rules to divide pensions. Third, in custody proceedings there are new rules to make sure that the necessary information is before judges before they grant custody of a child to a non-parent. Finally, we're looking at the family process to make it faster—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

INJURED WORKERS

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. You are aware of a program named the attendance support management pilot program. The program applies to staff within the corrections bargaining unit. Minister, staff within your ministry have approached me, and a number of them are concerned and disturbed that if they are injured while on duty and placed on WSIB they are then subject to a level one interview to discuss their absenteeism. I'd like you to explain why would you allow dedicated employees to be subjected to what amounts to an intimidating and stressful interview just because they're injured while protecting Ontarians?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I think I can say categorically, as the minister responsible for correctional services, never has there been the level of co-operation between the administration within correctional services and the union representing the workers.

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Our workers do very important work. For the first time in a very long time, they are respected for the jobs they are doing. We believe it is imperative that that dialogue

between management and labour is ongoing. That is the approach we have taken, and that is the approach we will continue to take.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Well, Minister, they'll certainly be impressed with that answer.

I'm told by employees performing the interviews that the ASMPP program is simply wrong, and those are the people performing the interviews. What is the purpose of the interviews? Any employee injured on the job and receiving therapy or attending a medical examination has their status reported directly to WSIB, not a third party person in the ministry. These correctional workers protect Ontarians and want to be treated like all other Ontarians.

I've had numerous complaints about this program. I'm asking you today if you will commit to an immediate and complete removal of this program of intimidation of employees?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: What I can commit to today, what I've committed to in the past and what I will commit to in the future, is that there will be enhanced dialogue between management and labour. That has already taken place, that is taking place, and that will continue to take place.

You see, the difference is that under a previous government that was in power from 1995 to 2003, they did everything to get rid of OPSEU and correctional services officers. Then, before them, from 1990 to 1995, the NDP government was so busy cutting, slashing, burning and not building any capacity. We will continue to build capacity. We will continue to dialogue with our employees, because we understand the importance of doing that type of thing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. We don't need to hear this government pass the buck to the federal bankruptcy and insolvency laws. We want to know what the provincial government should have, could have and would have done.

Last year, I walked the line with shut out Progressive Moulded Products employees, many with 10 to 25 years of service and mostly women, who arrived at work to find out they had lost their jobs. On top of this, these employees lost their severance and termination pay when their employer closed the doors without notice.

What does the minister have to say to these women and men who are still trying to get justice, still trying to get their severance and wages, but have had absolutely no help from this government?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is always difficult to hear that anyone, a loved one, someone we know, a family member, any Ontarian has lost their job. These workers worked hard. They have put in countless hours, many

countless years. I say to the member that—and he's heard me speak in this House—we continue to urge the federal government, which has exclusive jurisdiction over bankruptcy and insolvency under that act. We want to move those workers from the back of the line to the front of the line when it comes to securing wages that they're owed.

We have also encouraged the federal government to increase the wage earner protection program to better help these workers who have lost their jobs, but we are doing everything possible to protect workers who have lost their jobs, and our hearts go out to them.

Mr. Paul Miller: I guess the minister didn't read my Bill 6.

These out-of-work employees understand there is little chance of receiving what is owed to them, yet they continue to fight so that future generations can be spared this injustice. Today, they're holding a silent vigil—silence that represents a response from this government. They are still owed more than \$30 million in severance and termination pay. The Minister of Labour did absolutely nothing to help these workers with the labour laws that are already in effect.

Stop passing the buck. And worse, Bill 6, which would have protected the severance and termination pay of these workers, is held up on the public agenda by your government. Why are the McGuinty Liberals deliberately keeping severance and termination pay from Ontario employees whose employers close the doors on their livelihoods and lives?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I listened to the member—but the member is well aware that this government has brought forward protections to help workers here in Ontario. The member has heard me speak in this House about our advocacy for all workers. We look to increase workers' benefits, we look to increase workers' protection—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just remind the honourable member that he just asked the question. I would ask him to listen to the answer.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I do understand the emotion when anyone has lost their job. It touches that employee, it touches their family, it touches the community at large, and it does have a serious impact on our Ontario economy. That is why we continue to urge the federal government to do the right thing: to amend the Bankruptcy and Insolvency Act, to move these workers from the back of the line to the front of the line, to ensure that they are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

TOURISM

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: This question is for our Minister of Tourism. The peak summer season for travel, as you know, is now coming to an end. Of course, there is no

doubt that this year the economic downturn has had an impact on tourist operations in the province. In addition to the economic challenges, as you'll appreciate, the tourism industry has also experienced other factors which have impacted both the province and the city of Toronto. For example, fewer US travellers visited the province because of the fluctuating Canadian dollar, the state of the general economy and, of course, over the implementation of passport requirements. Minister, what is the government doing to help the vital tourism industry in the greater Toronto area?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Thank you to the member for Etobicoke North.

Yes, as we've discussed in this House before, the tourism sector is suffering through a very difficult year, but we recognize it to be an economic driver in the province and, through our Celebrate Ontario program, have invested in 224 festivals and events, including this year in Contact Toronto Photography. This festival, which is held in the month of May in Toronto, focused attention on 1,200 local, national and international artists at 225 venues across the city of Toronto.

I had the opportunity of meeting with Darcy Killeen, the executive director of this great festival, and he told me that over 1.6 million people attended the festival—an 8% increase over last year—and 30,000 of those visitors were new to the festival altogether. The total visitor expenditures this year were estimated to be about \$11 million, a 23% increase over last year. This festival has now been recognized as the largest photography festival in the world.

We are incredibly proud to be a supporter of Contact photography, and we are incredibly proud of this festival in Toronto and Ontario.

DEFERRED VOTES

ONTARIO COLLEGE OF TRADES AND APPRENTICESHIP ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR L'ORDRE DES MÉTIERS DE L'ONTARIO ET L'APPRENTISSAGE

Deferred vote on the motion for third reading of Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1138 to 1143.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those in favour will please rise one at a time and be recorded by the Clerk.

Ayes

Albanese, Laura
Arthurs, Wayne
Balkissoon, Bas
Bartolucci, Rick
Bentley, Christopher
Bradley, James J.
Brown, Michael A.
Brownell, Jim
Caplan, David
Carroll, Aileen
Chan, Michael
Colle, Mike
Craiton, Kim
Crozier, Bruce
Delaney, Bob
DiNovo, Cheri
Dombrowsky, Leona
Duguid, Brad
Duncan, Dwight
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Fonseca, Peter
Gerretsen, John
Gravelle, Michael
Horwath, Andrea
Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Levac, Dave
Marchese, Rosario
Matthews, Deborah
McGuinty, Dalton
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Miller, Paul
Milloy, John
Mitchell, Carol
Mori, Reza

Oraziotti, David
Pendergast, Leeanna
Phillips, Gerry
Prue, Michael
Pupatello, Sandra
Qaadri, Shafiq
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Tabuns, Peter
Takhar, Harinder S.
Van Bommel, Maria
Watson, Jim
Wilkinson, John
Wynne, Kathleen O.
Zimmer, David

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): All those opposed?

Nays

Arnott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Chudleigh, Ted
Dunlop, Garfield
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim

Jones, Sylvia
Klees, Frank
MacLeod, Lisa
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
Murdoch, Bill
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shurman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Wilson, Jim
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 59; the nays are 25.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I declare the motion carried.

Be it resolved that the bill do now pass and be entitled as in the motion.

Third reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1147 to 1500.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

ROY E. CARTER MEMORIAL PARK

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to advise this House of the dedication of the Roy E. Carter park in Blackstock, Ontario, on November 9 this year. Flying Officer Carter was a navigator on a Halifax bomber. He survived when his plane was shot down in the Netherlands on June 17, 1944.

Sadly, Mr. Carter was executed by the Gestapo about two weeks later, along with a flyer from England and one from Australia. The three were taking shelter in a safe house established by the Dutch resistance. The member of the resistance who protected the flyers, Mrs. Coba Pulskens, was sent to a concentration camp, where she later perished. The Roy E. Carter park, sometimes

unofficially called Crestview park, is located nearby the boyhood hometown of Roy Carter.

This is the time when we cherish and honour Canada's heroes who gave their lives for our freedom and our peace. The naming of this park ensures that the courage and sacrifice of Flying Officer Carter and his comrades are always remembered in Roy Carter's home community of Blackstock. I'm pleased to commit that the mayor of Scugog township, Marilyn Pearce, and others, including the Honourable Bev Oda, and myself will be there to show our respects during this time of Remembrance Day week.

CLIMATE CHANGE

Mr. Phil McNeely: On October 24, a group of concerned residents from my riding gathered in front of Gisèle-Lalonde high school to have their picture taken to mark the International Day of Climate Action. In doing so, they joined thousands of people who took part in 5,200 events in 181 different countries in the most widespread day of environmental action in the planet's history. Hundreds of pictures from these events have been posted on the website 350.org.

Central to the day of climate action is the number 350, which is the level scientists have identified as the safe upper limit for CO₂ in our atmosphere. We have now reached CO₂ levels of 384 parts per million, and with business as usual may hit 525 parts per million by 2050 unless changes are made to decrease them. Average temperatures would increase four to six degrees by 2100, and that would be catastrophic.

A number of the participants in my riding of Ottawa-Orléans are also members of Project Karyne, a local environmental group that was formed in 2006 in memory of Karyne Maisonneuve, who died of complications from cancer at the age of eight.

As we move forward with our own environmental initiatives, it's important for us all to acknowledge that the impact of climate change remains an important concern among many Ontarians. Through my private member's bill, Bill 208, it is my sincere hope that this House will come together in designating April 21 as Climate Change Awareness Day in Ontario and in calling on the Ministers of Education and the Environment to work together to produce an annual report card for students in grade 5.

SCHOOL PLAYGROUND

Mr. Ted Arnott: In Acton today, at the McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School, children are playing, as they have done for many years, on their playground. Yet that playground is still in jeopardy because of bad policy originating in the office of the Minister of Education. I have repeatedly raised this matter with the government. I have spoken to the minister personally. I have written to her more than once. I have raised the issue in the Legislature.

The minister may not believe that it's important enough for her to get involved, but the people of Acton are getting involved. They know it's important. In fact, I've been told that 5,000 people have signed their names to a petition.

Here's a constructive suggestion for the minister: The minister could immediately review regulation 444, which is being interpreted to compel the sale of public land considered to be surplus without consideration of the overwhelming wishes of the community. The minister has ignored this problem for months now. She should take this opportunity to review this regulation with a view to clarifying it, and advise the board to have a formal public process for consultation looking toward solutions. I believe there can be a solution, and if one can be found, Acton parents deserve all the credit.

Melissa Secord and the McKenzie-Smith Bennett Public School council have been tireless and exceedingly well organized in raising awareness of this issue. They deserve our thanks and the thanks of our entire community, but we still need the minister's help. We need her to put the needs of the community and the kids first. We need her to get out of the way of the children's right to play.

POVERTY

Mr. Jim Brownell: I rise in the House today to recognize the students and teachers of St Lawrence Intermediate School in the city of Cornwall, who recently joined community leaders at a conference for Stand Up and Take Action 2009.

Stand Up and Take Action is an international initiative organized by the Make Poverty History campaign to draw attention to local and global poverty issues. The conference took place on October 17 and recognized the International Day for the Eradication of Poverty. Guest speakers included Order of Canada recipient and Child Haven International founder Fred Cappuccinno; Agapè Centre executive director Judy Dancause; Ontario disability support program action chair Denise Vernier; and local poverty activists Gary Samler and Hélène Paquin. Grade 10 student senators Charlotte McEwen and Victoria Boyd also made brief speeches on behalf of their school.

As a former teacher, I am encouraged to see these students rallying around the issue of poverty. Poverty is an ongoing issue which these young people will be dealing with over the course of their generation. The ideas from young minds are very important to the community, and these young citizens will be the leaders of the future. It is important to recognize those who have achieved or who have done things which stand out, especially in the area of poverty reduction. Today, more than ever, we need their energy, their enthusiasm and their idealism.

The students of St. Lawrence Intermediate School are a prime example of hard work, dedication and passion to

this important cause of poverty reduction, and I congratulate them.

HEALTH CARE FUNDING

Mr. Randy Hillier: Time and time again, we have seen the McGuinty administration choose who the winners and losers will be in their government by lottery. A billion dollars in eHealth has brought us nothing, while amidst the chaos and the confusion of the ministry, good, honest people are being left out in the cold.

Imagine the shock and the frustration for Cheryl Miller, who suffers from reflex sympathetic dystrophy and has a spinal cord stimulator implant. She requires a neurostimulator battery replacement and she has been denied this surgery by the Ministry of Health. Ironically, the cost of Cheryl's procedure is about the same as the speech done by the consultants at eHealth that her taxes helped pay for. It seems that Cheryl is at the mercy of a health care ministry that has money for its friends but none for its patients.

The neurostimulator battery replacement Cheryl requires is a listed procedure on page Z16 of the schedule of insured services in Ontario. Insured services, by default, are a contract and a guarantee.

I call upon the Minister of Health to look into cases such as Cheryl's to ensure that no citizen of this province is left behind and that the ministry is actually doing its job.

BREAKFAST FOR BURSARIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I rise in the House today to notably mention an endeavour by Brescia University College. On October 23, they held their annual Breakfast for Bursaries, an event to raise funds for the Eleonore Donnelly Bursary for women with financial needs. It was an exciting morning as I had the chance to meet the guest speaker, Dr. Samantha Nutt, who is the founder and executive director of War Child Canada.

Out of the numerous scholarships and bursaries that help students across Ontario, I personally hold this one to be very significant because it caters to women who have great potential but are disadvantaged due to financial constraints. This bursary grant creates an opportunity to women who are generally overlooked by society and gives them the chance to flourish as leaders and decision-makers.

I am proud to have Brescia in my city of London. It is a landmark that still holds claim to Canada's only university-level women's college. This is a one-of-a-kind institution that offers a rich education that builds both leaders and scholars.

1510

I would like to thank Allison Holden for organizing the breakfast and the people who have established the Eleonore Donnelly bursary. I think it's a very important issue: to support women who don't have the financial

ability to continue their education and to help us grow as a province and have a prosperous future.

SPORT ACADEMY PROGRAM

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On October 23, I had the privilege of touring a number of schools in Hamilton to learn about several exciting new initiatives in education. In particular, I saw first-hand the success of the sport academy program. This unique program is designed for students who have demonstrated high athletic skill and a strong commitment to academics. It's offered at R.A. Riddell school in Hamilton; 127 students from across the area are given flexible timetables to focus on athletic excellence. Once at high school, the students are able to continue the program at Westmount Secondary School. I had the opportunity to speak to many of these students, and let me just tell you, they are inspirational. They love the program.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Ken Bain, the associate director of the Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board, for inviting me to take part in this tour. In addition, I'd like to thank one of the great trustees, Wes Hicks; as well as Wes Hahn, the principal; Nancy Radojevic, the vice-principal; and Amos Connolly, teacher at R.A. Riddell—who have made this program such a success.

I would also like to thank Ron Mauro, who is the vice-principal, and Tom Payne, teacher, at Westmount Secondary School, who have done a fantastic job with this program at Westmount.

This is just one example of the forward-thinking, successful initiatives being undertaken in Hamilton schools today. I am so very proud of all of them.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Just so the House will understand there's no favouritism here, the clock didn't start, so I wasn't able to time it.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: The McGuinty Liberals are engaged in a bizarre exercise in media spin. As children's aid societies across Ontario are required by law to extend health and protection to children at risk, the McGuinty Liberals are cutting the CAS budgets. The Minister of Children and Youth denies that budgets have been cut, but an examination of the government's own documents shows that Ontario children's aid societies are receiving \$23 million dollars less than what they actually received last budget year.

As a result of the budget cuts, the children's aid societies have been placed in an impossible situation. For example, the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River has had its budget cut by over \$400,000 this year. But, at the same time, the youth justice act and a judge making a decision under that act has ordered a child in the wardship of the CAS into a special residential treatment home at a cost of \$450 a day. Another child has had to be placed in another specialized residential

treatment home at a cost of \$350 a day. Total cost for a year: over \$200,000. Meanwhile, the McGuinty government is cutting the CAS's budget by \$400,000. What is the CAS supposed to do? Abandon these children?

APPRENTICESHIP TRAINING

Mr. Dave Levac: We all know that Ontario's workers are some of the most productive and skilled in the country and indeed in the world. Apprenticeships are essential for this continued contribution, and the McGuinty government is committed to helping them succeed.

In the global economy, the McGuinty government is providing new apprentices the skills and training to succeed in skilled jobs closer to home, creating a stronger economy and to help us support our communities in general. Supporting apprenticeships is an investment in Ontario's future, and the McGuinty government's financial investments will help them fill the high-skilled, high-quality jobs of the future. This includes providing grants up to \$2,000 to apprentices upon successful completion of the training, and additional grants of up to \$1,500 to offset the cost of that school.

This \$8.3-million investment is in addition to our government's increasing the apprenticeship training tax credit to \$10,000, making it the most generous tax credit of its kind in Canada. These investments mean apprentices can stay in Ontario and gain the skills that they need for the future they want right here in Ontario. We are putting students first, and the McGuinty government's support of skilled workers will help us build a stronger Ontario together.

With the inclusion of these new ideas that have come from the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities, we are absolutely convinced that the apprentices and the private sector will come on board in order to provide us with an opportunity to ensure that the jobs of the future are filled by Ontarians right here in Ontario.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the October 27, 2009, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

STANDING COMMITTEE ON PUBLIC ACCOUNTS

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I beg leave to present a report on gasoline diesel fuel and tobacco tax from the

Standing Committee on Public Accounts and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations.

Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I wish to debate the motion right now, at least briefly.

The public accounts committee, which is a committee of the Legislature that reviews portions of the Auditor General's report—in this case, section 3.10 of the 2008 report—calls before it witnesses who are involved in the implementation or administration of programs. Our duty, as the public accounts committee, which is made up of members of all parties in this House, is to work to a large degree in a non-partisan fashion to come up with recommendations to try to solve the problems that the auditor has identified.

In this case, the auditor has identified a significant problem in the loss of taxes to the Minister of Revenue for tobacco tax. That is because there are a great many cigarettes being sold illegally, as we have heard in the news recently.

Our committee reviewed the administration and the enforcement of this area of our laws. The committee found that there are indeed a number of areas where improvements could be made. The committee made 10 recommendations, and many of those recommendations focus in on the coordination of the efforts of the Ministry of Revenue, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. All of these three enforcement agencies have different powers, but in some cases, the lack of power in the hands of one of those three inhibits their ability to actually enforce our overall laws.

The committee wants to make certain that the government works towards creating and having more comprehensive coordination and co-operation between the Ministry of Revenue of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

For instance, the OPP cannot seize contraband tobacco unless they get permission or authority from the Ministry of Revenue. However, the Ministry of Revenue does not have 24/7 service, and many of the interceptions of illegal tobacco are made in the early morning hours of the day. So we make a number of recommendations relating to that lack of coordination.

As well, we make a number of recommendations with regard to things like having an allocation system for cigars for our aboriginal nations. Most other jurisdictions have an allocation for the number of cigars that can be sold on aboriginal First Nations property or reserves. However, Ontario doesn't have that, and we are asking the ministry to respond to us about when they are going to make such an allocation.

1520

This is a very, very serious problem that we have here. We've lost over half a billion dollars in revenue. It's time for the ministry and the minister to come forward with some concrete solutions to address this problem.

Of course, the committee was most concerned about the fact that many young people are gaining access to these cheap illegal cigarettes and therefore impugning the health of our young people of our province.

So it's a very important report. The committee worked very hard and diligently on this, and I recommend it to all members to read in the near future.

I move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Sterling has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

Carried.

Debate adjourned.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the minister wish to make a short statement?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: During ministerial statements, please.

PENSION BENEFITS AMENDMENT ACT (TRANSFERS ON WIND UP), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES RÉGIMES DE RETRAITE (TRANSFERTS À LA LIQUIDATION)

Mr. Sterling moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 213, An Act to amend the Pension Benefits Act respecting transfers on wind ups / *Projet de loi 213, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les régimes de retraite en ce qui concerne les transferts à la liquidation.*

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Does the member wish to make a short statement?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: This will be briefer than my previous statement.

This bill does evolve out of a request by Nortel pensioners. The bill amends the Pension Benefits Act to expand the transfer rights that are available on the windup of a pension. On the windup of a pension plan, the act currently allows individuals who are entitled to a pension benefit but are not receiving the pension at the time to transfer the value of their pension to another pension plan, a prescribed registered savings arrangement or a life annuity. However, if that person is already a pensioner or a survivor of a pensioner, they're only given one option on the windup of a pension plan, and that option is for FSCO, the Financial Services Commission of Ontario, to purchase a life annuity for them.

This bill would give the latter group—existing pensioners and their survivors—an alternative to buy an RRSP or an RRIF instead of having a life annuity, and that is important at this time because life annuities are at an all-time low in their value. Legislative legal counsel consulted with FSCO on the wording of this amendment. The morning, I gave a copy to the finance minister and hope for his support.

Time is of the essence because Nortel could be wound up at any time. I urge all members to support this on November 26 and urge the government to call it for third and final reading shortly thereafter.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I seek unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 47 be waived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

GOOD GOVERNANCE

LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'm pleased to rise in the House today on behalf of the McGuinty government to introduce legislation that would, if passed, strengthen our laws by increasing transparency, accountability and effectiveness.

Good governance requires having the right systems and structures in place to carry out the original intent of

the legislation. In some cases, this means responding to new developments in technology. In other areas, changes may be needed to modernize terminology or replace outdated terms.

This bill is the combined response of many ministries. Each has reviewed its laws and regulations with the goal of increasing transparency, accountability and effectiveness. The result is close to 600 items from 22 ministries.

Bien qu'un certain nombre de ces articles apportent des changements techniques et de bonnes mesures d'ordre administratif, d'autres prévoient des initiatives qui amélioreraient une partie de nos systèmes et processus.

While a number of these items are technical changes and good housekeeping measures, the bill also includes initiatives that would improve some of our systems and processes.

La protection de la vie privée des Ontariens et Ontariennes est un sujet que chaque membre de la Chambre prend au sérieux.

The privacy of Ontarians is something everyone in this House takes seriously. The Information and Privacy Commissioner recently completed a comprehensive report which provides recommendations on ways to ensure the protection of individual privacy rights in the course of verifying juror eligibility under the provincial Juries Act. Today we're moving forward with proposed amendments to the Juries Act which would create a clear and transparent process for screening prospective jurors who are ineligible to serve on a jury because of a prior criminal conviction.

The amendments would authorize criminal record checks to be conducted centrally through the provincial jury centre. This would ensure that juror eligibility under the act is checked independently from court locations and that it is done according to strict confidentiality requirements. The proposed amendments maximize respect for privacy because the names of ineligible jurors would be replaced before lists were sent to court locations so that information is never provided directly to any of the participants in court proceedings. These proposed changes would also clarify the existing legislation.

Public inquiries can provide governments with direction and expertise. However, over the years inquiries have become increasingly complex, time-consuming and costly. The amendments to the Public Inquiries Act would, if passed, provide the government and commissioners with better tools to determine the scope and manage the cost and length of public inquiries. For instance, whereas commissions are currently formal, courtlike proceedings, these amendments would require future commissions to rely, where appropriate, on factual sources that promote efficiency, such as representative witnesses, agreed statements of facts, and existing records and reports. These tools reflect modern case management techniques. This will mean that when inquiries are necessary, they will complete their important function in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The bill would also allow for the establishment of specific rules and requirements in regard to completion dates.

With these proposed changes, Ontarians, commissioners and governments can be confident that future inquiries will return strong, constructive reports and recommendations.

1530

We're also looking to strengthen the integrity of municipal elections. The proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act were developed in consultation with the public, municipalities and municipal and school organizations, such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. If passed, they would respond to issues identified by candidates, voters and election administrators. These changes include an improved voters list, a new contribution limit and firm deadlines for filing financial statements. The changes would help to clarify campaign finance rules, enhance compliance and enforcement measures, and help to ensure a transparent municipal election process.

Along with these proposed changes, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing will continue to undertake a review of the municipal elections process and the Municipal Elections Act after every municipal election.

The proposed Good Government Act, 2009, includes a number of measures that will increase the effectiveness, clarity and accountability of government.

Elle propose des changements qui assureront à la population ontarienne la protection de ses droits et un service public efficace.

It proposes changes that will ensure that Ontarians' rights are protected and that the people of this province are well served by their government. Ontario is constantly changing, and our laws, regulations and systems must keep pace with the times.

I call on the members of this House to support these proposed amendments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Response?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I'm pleased to rise today and speak on behalf of the Progressive Conservative Party and our leader, Tim Hudak, regarding the Good Government Act, 2009. Of course, the Good Government Act, 2009, begs the question, what did we have before this bill? Perhaps this bill is in reference to Terence Corcoran, who has labelled this government the worst government in Canada—but now we are going to have good government.

I'd like to begin by making some comments on the process undertaken here. I think we have 300 or 400 pages in the bill, and it affects 26 schedules and I think over 600 items by the minister's count; he referred to three of them in his opening comments. We received this document some 15 minutes ago, and we're expected to make some intelligent comments concerning this bill in that period of time.

At an earlier period of time, even a few months ago, we would have received this bill perhaps at noon and would have had perhaps three hours to go through it and make some comment on it as to whether it did live up to

the title of “good government” or not, but as it is, that didn’t happen. All that happened was that a lot of trees in Ontario died for the printing of this very oversized bill.

In listening to the minister and reviewing the compendium very quickly, we assume that “good government” means that we are going to be, hopefully, saving some money of taxpayers. But we didn’t see anything in this bill, in a very quick reference, that would lead me to believe that money was going to be saved by this bill. I wondered why the government hasn’t tried to save money. For instance, in the eHealth scandal, the Auditor General pointed out that the money was provided to Egon Zehnder, a recruiting firm, and they were paid \$1 million upfront for the hiring of three senior management positions. All fees were paid, but only five positions were filled and, to our knowledge, there has been no attempt by this government to recoup any of that \$1 million in the failure of that firm to hire 10 employees. Why that attempt wasn’t made, I don’t know, but I would hope that somewhere in the depths of these pages there might be something that refers to that, because certainly that would mean to me there was some good government taking place and that government is getting value for money—and we don’t see that happening there.

There were also other losses incurred in eHealth. There were losses incurred in the ministry and the Smart Systems process. None of these have attempted to recoup some of the billion dollars that Ontarians are so upset about these days.

Good government would indicate, it would seem to me, that there would be some attempt to prevent these kinds of things in the future. I hope there’s something in this legislation that would talk to the future of these bills.

There are none in the schedules that we very quickly looked at. Perhaps it’s there—I’m not saying it isn’t—but I didn’t see it. There was nothing about the 50% of tobacco that is being sold in this province today that we aren’t getting any taxes on and that is being sold out of vans and out of the back seats and trunks of cars, usually in juxtaposition to a high school or a school. And students probably have the ability to purchase things other than tobacco at the same time. It makes it very convenient for the criminal element in this province, and I think the government could go a long way towards having good government if they took a real shot at some of that illegal tobacco that’s circulating around this province.

The Progressive Conservative Party has been calling on this government to make some real changes, to bring out some good government and to try to move away from the possibly of incurring huge deficits in the future. You ignored our advice in the past. We now have a \$24.7-billion deficit. It is certainly time for some good government.

We on this side of the House look forward to supporting the principle of this bill in introducing some good government in this province, as opposed to what we’ve had beforehand.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Responses.

Mr. Michael Prue: This morning I was told that, in the absence of my colleague the member from Welland, who is the critic, I would have to respond. I tried to find out what this bill was all about. We searched high and low. We asked questions of Liberal operatives who sit behind you. They were closed-lipped: Not one person would comment on what was contained within the bill.

Just as I walked in here, I was fortunate enough to go to the Toronto Star. They already knew what was in the bill, because they’ve already printed a news article on it. I don’t know how the Toronto Star could print a news article before we’re handed a copy of the bill. I’m not even sure that all the facts they have are right, but it’s there.

So here I am with 500 or 600 pages. I tried to read them all—but I’m not that fast a speed-reader—while the minister was speaking. A couple of things jumped out immediately to me, things which make me wonder if this is what the government intent is.

The first one that I thumbed through and found was that citizens will no longer have the right to petition the cabinet against an errant or wrong OMB decision. That is going to be taken away. That’s contained within the body of this bill.

The next one I looked at puzzled me, too, that the Solicitors Act removes the limitation on the rate of interest chargeable on a solicitor’s bill, so that a solicitor may now charge any rate of interest at all. I wondered why this is buried in the body of the bill.

I looked at the Municipal Elections Act. I was hoping, of course, to find out that there would be a municipal integrity commissioner who could delve into problems like those the city of Vaughan is currently experiencing, with all the lawsuits and counter-lawsuits and all of the problems that that municipality has. I didn’t find it.

I was looking to see that there were some difficulties around corporate and union donations that the city of Toronto is grappling with, but there’s nothing to that effect.

What I did find is that this government wishes to change the municipal election date so that it would now occur on the fourth Monday of October. Now, I don’t have any problem with it being on the fourth Monday of October, but every seven years that means it’s going to fall on Halloween. I don’t know who over there wants to hold a municipal election on Halloween, but that’s what this bill says.

I looked further and saw that they’re limiting the contributions to \$5,000 per contributor. I don’t have any problem with that aspect of the bill but I do think it’s kind of high. It means that any contributor can make a \$5,000 contribution to multiple members running for municipal council, including the mayor and councillors, and it means that the undue influence is going to continue to be there. But there’s nothing in the bill that I have read that says somebody who has multiple numbered companies can’t make \$5,000 and \$5,000 and \$5,000 and \$5,000 contributions, because I didn’t read that in there. But then again, it is 500 or 600 pages; it might be hiding somewhere inside.

1540

There is one good aspect that I found and want to commend. The one good aspect I was able to find in those couple of minutes was that the carry-forward of funds by municipal candidates will no longer be allowed. If there is one egregious section of the current act, that is it. You can always find something good reading through 500 or 600 pages, and I found it.

There's a section here on jury verification, and I think that as well is something whose time has come.

When I was looking for good governance, I was hoping to see within these 500 or 600 pages the government taking action on some of the more egregious issues of the day, those including the corporate tax giveaway that this government is hell-bent on going forward with, to the tune of some \$4.5 billion, while they wallow in a debt of \$24.7 billion. I was hoping there would be something in here that would make it impossible ever again for those things that happened around the eHealth fiasco to happen, but I was unable to find any references to those in these pages. I looked for the \$1-million-per-day consultant habit to see whether or not the consultants would be limited in some way by changes to the various acts, but unfortunately, I was unable to find any reference to that as well.

I was also looking to see whether or not there would be changes to the act relating to poverty and to poor people and to those who are on ODSP or Ontario Works and about how they might be funded or how the city might be able to pay for them, knowing full well that many cities like London and Hamilton have expressed real concern. Unfortunately, there was nothing in this act about that either.

Here we are; in a couple of minutes I was able to find a couple of good things in 600 pages and a whole bunch of bad ones. I think that this bill really, really needs some study.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I beg to inform the House that, pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Mr. Shurman assumes ballot item number 61 and Ms. Jones assumes ballot item number 73.

PETITIONS

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: It's an appropriate time for a petition here that speaks to good governance, or lack of it. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that may result in numerous communities across

rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in small communities; and

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

"Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need to attract and retain doctors" in their communities.

I'm pleased to sign in support of this and send it to the table with Rebecca, one of the fine young pages here.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm happy to present this petition coming from the people of Sault Ste. Marie asking for a PET scanner, and it goes as such:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... (PET) scanning a publicly insured health service ... ; and

"Whereas, by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the clerks' table with page James.

GARDE D'ENFANTS

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have a petition from Suzanne Hupé from St-Albert.

« À l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario :

« Nous, citoyens de la province de l'Ontario, méritons et avons le droit de demander des modifications à la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère, ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents, comme le prévoit le projet de loi 33, 2008, présenté par le député provincial Kim Craitor.

« Attendu que le paragraphe 20(2.1) de la Loi exige que les père et mère et autres personnes qui ont la garde d'enfants ne doivent pas faire déraisonnablement ob-

stacle aux relations personnelles qui existent entre les enfants et leurs grands-parents;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2) de la Loi énumère les questions dont le tribunal doit tenir compte pour établir l'intérêt véritable d'un enfant. Le projet de loi modifie ce paragraphe de façon à inclure une mention expresse de l'importance du maintien des liens affectifs qui existent entre enfants et grands-parents...;

« Attendu que le paragraphe 24(2.2) de la Loi exige qu'un tribunal qui décide de la garde d'un enfant prenne en compte la volonté de chaque personne qui demande, par requête, la garde de l'enfant de faciliter les contacts entre celui-ci et ses père et mère ainsi que ses grands-parents, compte tenu de l'intérêt véritable de l'enfant;

« Nous, soussignés, adressons à l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario la pétition suivante :

« Que les députés de l'Assemblée législative de l'Ontario adoptent le projet de loi 33, 2008, qui modifie la Loi portant réforme du droit de l'enfance, de façon à faire valoir l'importance des relations qu'ont les enfants avec leurs père et mère ainsi qu'avec leurs grands-parents. »

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario signed by what would appear to be just about every resident in my riding.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition, and I will sign it, as I agree with it.

WOOD HARVESTING

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Mr. Speaker. One has to speak up for themselves in this place, it looks like. I have a petition here that reads as follows.

"To the Parliament of Ontario:

"Whereas the Departure Lake Cottage Association, the cottage owners, the citizens of Smooth Rock Falls and area, and other users of Departure Lake are opposed to the harvesting of wood by anyone in wood unit number TOA76;

"Whereas the impact on the environment, the wildlife and the tourism to our area would be directly affected, resulting in irreversible damage to the lake and permanent loss of local wildlife and its habitat;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Parliament of Ontario to appeal to the Minister of Natural Resources to stop all harvesting activities planned for wood unit number TOA76 indefinitely."

I've signed that petition and I've also sent a letter to the MNR.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand in my place and introduce a petition on behalf of Danielle Masse. She is an employee at the Lambeth licence centre, 2095 Wharncliffe Road South. The petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

We are asked to stop the closure of the Lambeth driver's licence office by ServiceOntario and continue to serve the surrounding community.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows."

This petition is signed by 11,713 people, and I'm pleased to give it to Hannah.

1550

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas undergraduate tuition fees in Ontario have increased by 195% since 1990 and are the third-highest of all of the provinces in Canada; and

"Whereas average student debt in Ontario has skyrocketed by 250% in the past 15 years to over \$25,000 for four years of study; and

"Whereas international students pay three to four times more for the same education, and domestic students in professional programs such as law and medicine pay as much tuition as \$20,000 per year; and

"Whereas 70% of new jobs require post-secondary education, and fees reduce opportunities for many low and middle-income families while magnifying barriers for aboriginal, rural, racialized and other marginalized students; and

"Whereas Ontario currently provides the lowest per capita funding for post-secondary education in Canada, while many countries fully fund higher education and charge little or no fees for college or university; and

"Whereas public opinion polls show that nearly three quarters of Ontarians think the government's Reaching Higher framework for tuition fee increases of 20% to 36% over four years is unfair;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, support the Canadian Federation of Students' call to immediately drop tuition fees to 2004 levels and petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to introduce a new framework that:

"—reduces tuition and ancillary fees annually for students;

"—converts a portion of every student loan into a grant; and

"—increases per-student funding above the national average."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I want to first thank Alex and Olga Alexander for submitting over 2,000 petitions in support of Bill 33. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We the people of Ontario deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents as requested in Bill 33 put forward by MPP for Niagara Falls; and

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relationships between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between the children and the grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child.

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm proud to sign my signature in support.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present another petition from the riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his ... 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming;" health care; "home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes," and, to end it all, funeral services;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the" new, dreaded "health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes" yet "again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That" Premier McGuinty's "government wake up to Ontario's" economic realities "and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Bethany, one of the new pages here at Queen's Park.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I would especially like to thank Dawn Pollard of Queen Street in Streetsville for having collected the signatures on this petition, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006...; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

"That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

It's a good petition. I'm pleased to sign it and to ask page Vladislav to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

“Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

“Whereas the government’s own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that government move swiftly to address this issue; and

“Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson’s resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS from HOOPP or OPTrust.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 19, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d’autres lois.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I certainly welcome the opportunity to speak to Bill 204, the Animal Health Act. One reason I wish to speak to this is that I have some concerns with respect to this legislation: that it will not accomplish all that those who have been asking for this legislation expect. In fact, in my mind, it could get worse. It will probably, over time, saddle farmers with unnecessary expense. I also see in this legislation a plethora of rules and regulations, red tape, forms to fill out and hoops for farmers to jump through.

Having said that, it is important to point out that Ontario, as we know, is one of the largest producers and processors of livestock and poultry in Canada. It, as I

understand it, remains the only province that does not have this type of animal health legislation, although, if you go back into the decades, there always has been Ministry of Agriculture legislation to deal with many of these problems. However, given the tough times in the hog industry and the cattle industry—the cattle industry has not recovered from the BSE crisis, and that goes back a number of years now—I feel that now is not the time for government to mandate additional costs.

1600

Many will know of—and we’ve heard this a number of times in the Legislature—a fellow named Wayne Bartels. He’s a new hog farmer. He comes from my riding. This is a chap, with his brother and his family, who has invested millions of dollars just in building the sow barns and the finishing operation. He’s at the point where he cannot afford to even pay his electricity bill.

This proposed legislation obviously should allow government to take action to protect not only animal health but also human health, as well as to create a traceability system. In debate, some questions have come up about just where we lie as far as traceability. To their credit, livestock producers—I think of cattlemen in particular—have developed their own traceability system. We have a provincial government that, in my view, is playing a bit of catch-up and can learn a great deal, for example, from what the cattlemen have done as far as traceability. I would certainly hope this government isn’t going to unnecessarily duplicate what the cattlemen have already accomplished.

On the flip side, my concern remains that this bill will create, obviously, a new system of permits and licences and the plethora of inspectors that go along with that, and of course the red tape and the expense for farmers. Of note are the sections in this legislation that will further infringe on people’s property and rights with respect to their property. I understand the bill specifically says these inspectors are not allowed to bust into your house. That’s a start. As for the rest of your property—your buildings, your outbuildings—you will see inspectors on your property as a result of this legislation, something that is ill-advised in many parts of Ontario and certainly down in the Caledonia area, where many of the farmers are, out of necessity, keeping an eye out in the evening with respect to some of the problems down our way. This is not the time to have a government inspector walking around behind the barn unannounced. It’s very dangerous for an inspector to do that down in parts of my riding.

As you well know, the hog and the cattle industries have been suffering. So many young farmers—just about 100 hog farmers, for example—regrettably are falling through the cracks instead of getting assistance from the Ontario cattle, hog and horticulture payment program. Any added expenses in this legislation—you add it on to everything else that’s being downloaded on to business in general, let alone agribusiness, let alone farms—may well be that proverbial straw that breaks the camel’s back.

For example, this bill fails to address and it lacks the necessary detail concerning who pays for livestock

should contagious animals on affected premises be ordered to be euthanized. This is not the 1920s, this is not the 1930s, when so many herds, out of necessity, were put down because of a disease referred to as contagious abortion. I grew up with cattle. Our family has always had polled shorthorns. We used them for beef and for dairy. Every one of our animals had to be killed. They came down with contagious abortion. The human version, I think, is called Bang's disease or brucellosis. My father came down with that disease as well. This is a good example of the linkage between animal health and human health. My father was out of school for a year. He had no complaints about that, by the way. It was probably one of the best years for him. He ended up in England, as I recall, with the family on a trip. But it's pretty serious business.

Among our neighbours, so many herds were put down at that time, going into tough times. The agricultural economy was in very tough times in the 1920s in our area, let alone in the 1930s. At that time, there was no compensation. I would hope this government has come further than those tough times and is fully in support of compensation for those who have had a herd or a flock put down because of a contagious disease.

This proposed bill establishes a Chief Veterinarian of Ontario—stakeholders asked for this—and it does limit the people eligible for the position to public service employees only. I don't think that's a particularly good idea. It does not have any requirement calling for years of experience out in the real world. Compare that to Ontario's chief medical officer, who is required to have I think a minimum of five years of real-world experience and service.

I think Bill 204 goes down the road of being heavy-handed in how it relates to farmers, including allowing these inspectors, who would be created by this legislation, to enter premises other than one's house—other than dwellings—without a warrant in a very wide range of circumstances. I hope this particular issue is highlighted as we continue the debate on this legislation. I would fully expect this issue of this warrantless entry imposition to come up in public hearings. It has certainly come up in my travels with other pieces of legislation, with respect to clean water, for example.

I'm suggesting that this bill and the attendant and ever-predictable regulations have to be discussed in detail. Public hearings are fine. If you're going to bring in the amount of regulation that we expect with this particular law, I recommend we have public hearings on the regulation. As government, we had public hearings on the Nutrient Management Act; not only on the act, but also with respect to the drafting of regulation. We've got to give those who will be impacted the most by this legislation an opportunity to ask these kinds of important questions, and not only to ask the questions but to get some answers as to who will be paying for what this bill is intended to provide.

Much of the reason for this legislation is to further the public good. That's when the public pays. Don't focus on

one group. Don't focus on hog producers, chicken men, broiler guys, hatching-egg guys or cattlemen to pay the freight for something that ostensibly is put in place for the benefit of society.

I am concerned with the way this government rushes through legislation. It will probably be law by the time my local cattlemen in Haldimand and Norfolk, my local federation of agriculture and the local groups have their annual meetings. These annual meetings are usually held in January or February. We're debating a bill fairly hard on the heels of summertime. People are still—certainly cash croppers are very preoccupied right now trying to get beans and corn in. I would be very disappointed if this was rammed through before Christmas, before the annual meetings start.

In most of our ridings, those of us who represent rural areas—because I can guarantee you that I'll walk into the Haldimand Cattlemen's Association annual meeting down in Kohler and this bill will be discussed, and the cost that is going to hit the small cow-calf operators will probably be on the agenda. It would be quite regrettable if everything is passed and locked up even before they have their meeting.

I feel that this proposed legislation goes beyond what's required to protect animal and human health. What concerns me is, when you go above and beyond, who gets to pay for it?

1610

We know that submissions have come in, and stakeholders have been asking for a traceability system or an extension of traceability. They've asked for government assistance on this particular program, which is a good program, by and large.

I don't see anything mentioned in this legislation about traceability. It's largely absent when you read the bill. Again, this is a government that has left the door open: "We'll talk about that later. It will come up in regulation." We as legislators won't get a chance to be part of that process; it's not going to be discussed in this House. I just base that on what we've seen in the past.

They would like to see more emphasis on a traceability system, ever bearing in mind that we produce the best food anywhere, the highest quality anywhere. We should be doing everything we can to protect that status and to protect and support our agribusiness sector, and part of that is traceability. Why bury that in regulation? I would like to see amendments that would roll this into the bill itself.

We all recognize this desire of the McGuinty government to protect the health and safety of not only Ontario's livestock but Ontario's population. That's a laudable goal, and there's no denying that farm animal disease outbreaks, wherever they happen to originate, can have very serious economic repercussions to local farmers, and the potential is there for very tragic repercussions with respect to public health. I mentioned losing that herd of cattle to contagious abortion. That was transmitted to my father. I'm sure that was transmitted to a number of people at the time.

The federation of agriculture, the OFA, overall they support this bill “to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario’s agriculture-food industry and further safeguard the province from the negative health and economic impacts associated with animal health events.”

The cattlemen’s association as well has commented on the draft legislation. You’ve got to remember there are close to 20,000 cattlemen in this province of Ontario, and this government would be well advised to listen to our cattlemen. On June 18, they indicated the plans for this government to move forward on farm animal health and a traceability initiative. They see this as a good thing. They support the proposed legislation because it’s necessary. They see it as a necessary tool to manage disease outbreaks, and in my view, not only to manage but also to prevent, to deal with when they happen and to follow up and evaluate what happened, not only for the health of the animals but for the overall integrity of our food supply basically, as well as our own health as a human population.

The federation of agriculture commented on this issue of mandatory reporting, and they do recognize that immediate reporting is a crucial first step. There’s an education component that’s here as well. Most livestock people know how important it is to keep an eye on your flock or keep an eye on your herd, and when in doubt, you phone the local vet. Again, under this legislation, you would be required to contact Ontario’s chief veterinarian as well.

However, these producers are already subject to considerable administrative and reporting responsibilities as it is. These kinds of administrative and reporting responsibilities do impose a cost not only in time, but a cost that’s reflected in the price, ultimately. It’s very difficult to pass that price on to the consumer. So the OFA sees this kind of reporting as potentially a very significant burden. They recommend that the ministry establish a mechanism for mandatory reporting that does not—and I want to repeat this—does not invoke significant additional costs and does not contribute to further burden. To do so, a comprehensive mechanism for compensation should be developed and be made readily available.

The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association insists that industry be extensively consulted on the specifics, including implementation protocols. It is recognized that any new legislation like this recognize the Office of the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario as a definitive authority during an emergency. The OFA recommends that this kind of legislation be consistent with similar municipal, provincial and federal legislation existing in these other jurisdictions. In their view, it’s imperative that this legislation be harmonized with other jurisdictions.

Just going back to traceability for a moment, the OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in a public benefit: “Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer. Costs associated with introducing traceability must have a mechanism to enable

implementation costs to be transmitted down the market chain to be absorbed by the consumer, or otherwise covered by government assistance programs.” I don’t think that’s spelled out in the various sections of this bill.

Again, every group recognizes the importance of traceability and data. The OCA, the Ontario cattlemen, would not oppose mandatory premises ID; however, they do request that the registration be captured in the already-existing CCIA database and not through another new registry. We don’t need this kind of duplication and I, for one, do not recommend this government—in setting up this kind of a database, don’t even think about hiring the kind of eHealth consultants that we’ve been reading about in the media. A billion dollars would go a long way toward helping our hog and beef farmers rather than paying the freight for consultants.

I’m going to wrap up now. If I had a bit more time, I would talk a bit more about Wayne Bartels, a hog farmer who is in serious problems. He doesn’t need these kinds of rules and regulations, red tape and cost.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I’d just like to commend the member from Haldimand–Norfolk. Many of his colleagues also have deep experience in the farming community in Ontario, and their input is always helpful in looking at these types of bills.

We don’t agree totally, once again, with the bill. But, once again, the government’s coming forward with a bill which is moving quickly. We hope, after second reading, at the committee level, that some of the amendments that have been suggested and some of the concerns that the official opposition and the third party will bring forward will be dealt with in a manner that would explain the situation and the concerns of farmers throughout Ontario, as well as people who deal with food.

I think that this bill will require some tuning for sure, and I hope that, once again, it doesn’t fall on deaf ears in committee and they just storm ahead without listening to suggestions from the official opposition and the third party. It’d be nice to see some of our amendments accepted occasionally, which would mean that we feel like we’re participating.

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The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Yes, the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I know it’s a long name for a riding.

I just wanted to get up and speak a little bit further about Bill 204 and comment on some of the comments made by the member for Haldimand–Norfolk. I think that, actually, the last time we debated this, it was within a day or so of that debate that we had the outbreak of H1N1 at a turkey farm near Kitchener. At that time, the farmer acted appropriately in reporting what was happening at his farm. In terms of what this act would do, that farmer was already acting in a way that would protect himself and other producers.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk talked about inspectors coming onto the farm, and he implied that there might be some danger to the inspectors, but I think most inspectors are quite professional and don't go skulking around the back barns. They certainly would knock at the door to say they're there.

One of the things that has to be noted is that when you do have an event of an outbreak, you want professional people there; you want people who are very aware of biosecurity, who are going to take the appropriate measures, because it's very critical to any farmer that that disease is not spread any further. That's what we need to have in terms of regulations.

I also want to talk about reportability. The member talked about the reporting of hazards and of disease, and one of the things that the bill does do is create a protection from liability for people who do report. That's an important thing as well. Anyone who reports something, be it a veterinarian or a lab technician, and report it in good faith, is held beyond liability for what they've done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, it's questions and comments.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Sorry. Questions and comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: I'd like to just follow up on a few of the comments from the member from Haldimand–Norfolk and from others here.

There are always some clear components to a Liberal piece of legislation. First off, it's going to restrict people's freedoms and not respect our constitutional history; and the second thing is, it's going to add cost. It's going to add cost to farmers. All, of course, in this misguided thought of the public good, that we should continually burden business people with additional cost. Of course, we have seen the growth and the consequence of that cost. Our economy is faltering; our agriculture, our farms are suffering huge challenges today.

The member from Haldimand–Norfolk mentioned Wayne Bartels. The people in the hog industry are being devastated right now. People in the cattle industry are being devastated, and what is the government's response? We have a bill that's going to create more paperwork, more administration, more cost without any value to the farms and farmers. That's a clear example of what we've seen throughout the tenure of this Liberal McGuinty administration: Add additional cost onto businesses.

We can see the consequences. We are now last place in this country; we are now a have-not-status province; we are underperforming every other jurisdiction. And what do the Liberals do? They bring out additional legislation that's going to add more cost onto our farms. Let's—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments and questions?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'll have a chance to speak to this a little bit later, but I sympathize with the points that were

made by the member from Haldimand–Norfolk because I think he's trying to say that not necessarily is the idea of food safety a bad idea; I think he would agree that food safety is a very important issue. But I think what the member is trying to say is, "My God, at a time when there's a perfect storm going on in the agricultural industry of Ontario, is this what they need as a life vest?" I think that's the point that the member is trying to make.

You have farmers who are struggling. I listened to the Bartels family for a couple of days on CBC Radio One, who were talking about their situation where they couldn't afford to pay their hydro bills as a result of what's happened in the hog industry. The federal government was hurrying in order to try to move a program forward that eventually lent them some assistance. Their criticism was that the provincial government was nowhere on the radar screen, as Mr. Bartels put it. There was no help coming from the province whatsoever, and he was looking for the province to do something to assist him and others who are in a really tough situation as a result of what's happened to the hog industry.

I think the point that the member from Haldimand–Norfolk makes is, food safety, yes, but, my Lord, there's a whole bunch of other things that need to be done in order to assist the agriculture industry. If the only response that we get in lightning speed from the provincial government is a bill on food safety, the farm community says to itself, "Well, what about us? What about the issues we have to deal with, the things that affect the cost on the family farm, the things that we need to do in order to make sure that we have access to market and the things that we need to do in order to deal with the financing issues and the cost structures on the farm?"

I think what the member was saying is a perfectly valid point, and it's unfortunate that the government members didn't take it that way, because if there's an industry that needs some help right now, I would say it's the agricultural industry.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Haldimand–Norfolk has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Toby Barrett: I appreciate the comments from various members. To the member from Lambton–Kent–Middlesex: I wouldn't want that member to downplay the seriousness of this warrantless entry business. I recognize that they're not allowed to bust into your house, but for many farmers, to catch somebody in their barn, that can be, in their mind, just as serious.

We know these government inspectors will be instructed to use whatever force is necessary. That's in the legislation. They will be accompanied by the OPP, if necessary. That strikes me as pretty heavy-duty stuff. I've grown up on farms, and I suggest that is not the way to go. I won't get into details, but I can attest to that from personal experience. On our farm, we're surrounded by cattle. It's very important that these standards are based on science.

I attended the hearings two summers ago on Bill 50, where the OSPCA—that legislation was updated with respect to animal welfare. We respectfully request, and I

know I'm dealing with the Liberal government, but don't go down that road. Don't go down the road of animal welfare. Do not continue to go down that road with respect to the OSPCA. Anything like that should not be included.

Bill 50 was a very vague piece of legislation. It gave a lot of power to those people who may not know a heck of a lot about farm animals, livestock, and that is of concern to farmers. They know this business. They have an organization. There's an excellent organization that can look after these kind of protocols. It's called the Ontario Farm Animal Council. I would hope that more responsibility is directed towards that particular organization.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? The member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek.

Mr. Paul Miller: I rise to talk about the Animal Health Act, G204. This bill aims to protect animal and human health by preventing the spread of livestock diseases and enabling an effective response to animal health issues. Of course, the NDP and all Ontarians share these objectives. We know there is a need to improve safety for human health.

In the summer of 2008, deaths from listeriosis made this quite clear. We need to be able to respond more quickly to outbreaks. That's a big part of what this bill is about. We also need to be more proactive in preventing disease in the first place. We need to better recognize that farm animal health and well-being is important in its own right, not only in terms of protecting human health.

Ontarians want to know that the food they and their families eat is safe. They want to know that they are being protected from viruses and diseases related to tainted meat. And an increasing number of Ontarians want to know that the animals that they are eating are being treated as humanely during their lifetime.

We need to ask of this bill: Will it improve human health? Will it improve animal health? Will it prevent farmers from being hit with disease outbreaks that undermine economic competitiveness? Are there any downsides to farmers, consumers and animals?

Let's look at its protection of human health first. This bill enables the government to more effectively respond to disease outbreaks. It allows the government to put in place a system to trace animals throughout the food system. It provides the minister with the power, upon the advice of the chief veterinarian, to issue control orders to limit the spread of diseases. It also allows the minister to take action to respond to hazards that prevent disease in the first place.

These are all important and positive and should be supported, but there are a number of cautions that need to be raised. First, some agricultural stakeholders have raised the concern that this bill may lead to government overly dictating and circumscribing animal production practices in the name of health protection. We have recently seen what that can look like in the same ministry which recently received coverage in the *Toronto Star*, where the turkey farmers of Ontario passed a regulation restricting turkeys from going outdoors, on safety grounds. Inter-

esting. However, this regulation conflicts with the requirement that turkeys have access to the outside in order to be certified as organic. There is a debate about whether the outdoor requirement is a health concern, but what is clear is that the turkey farmers of Ontario were able to basically strike out organic turkey production on farms with more than 50 turkeys with the stroke of a pen, with only questionable health benefits.

Efforts by organic farmers' organizations to suggest a compromise—such as the one reached in Quebec, where feeding was outside—were scuttled. The turkey farmer regulation was upheld by the OMAFRA tribunal, although now that the issue has hit the pages of the *Toronto Star*, the minister has been sparked to action to possibly help find a compromise.

In the US, farm industry groups have also cited health and safety concerns as a reason for opposing improvements in animal welfare. Opponents of proposition 2 in California, which bans restrictive caging of animals starting in 2015, have argued that free-range eggs are more likely to carry salmonella because the hen's cage temperature is carefully calibrated. Interestingly, research actually shows lower levels of the disease when hens have more space.

The point to be made here is that sometimes the protection of health can be used as a pretext to marginalize alternative farming methods such as organics and biodynamics. We must not allow this legislation to do this. My understanding is that ministry officials have assured stakeholders that it's not the intention of the ministry to impose a monolithic approach to production with this bill. Yes, lots of new powers are opened up, but the intention here, according to the ministry officials, is to create legislation that is flexible enough to move us into the future by providing mechanisms to intervene on the public's behalf. But assurances are not enough. This intention should be clearly elucidated in the preamble to the bill.

A second and related question is how it will be determined when there is a real need for the minister to intervene with orders and restrictions on farm practices. As it stands, the minister can take action based on the advice of the chief veterinarian. Not to question the expertise of the chief veterinarian, but that is a lot of responsibility to put on one person's shoulders.

There are numerous interests and perspectives at stake here, and a forum for dialogue by those involved would seem to be more important. My understanding is that the ministry officials have spoken of intentions to set up an advisory council to advise on when intervention is needed. That's a good thing, but again, why is there nothing in the bill about this? Who would make up the advisory body? Why not put in the bill that the advisory body will be formed with representation from all farm sectors, including growing organic and biodynamic sectors, and farm animal welfare groups?

Third, like many of this government's bills, this is an enabling bill. It enables government to set regulations around reporting, traceability, quarantines and other animal

practices, so the effectiveness and scope will depend on the nature of the regulations. Unfortunately, discussions about regulations are less open and democratic than discussions about legislation, so the fight will go on behind closed doors; already it has started. Industry groups want to limit the scope of the bill and the scope for regulations to emergency situations involving the containment of outbreaks. They do not want handling and housing of animals to be included.

Here's the key debate, then: To what extent should the bill allow the promotion of animal health and welfare and the prevention of hazards in the first place, and to what extent should it focus more narrowly on the containment and control of disease? This is an important discussion, and it would be good to hear the perspectives of all parties on this as we move forward.

There is understandable concern among farmers that government will intervene too much in the day-to-day practices of their farms, imposing costs and burdens that farmers aren't in a position to bear. Some groups have argued that broader animal welfare practices are covered by the SPCA amendments and by a voluntary code of conduct. Here, SPCA amendments exclude farm animals, and according to many, voluntary codes of practice are insufficient. We know how well industry self-regulation worked at the federal level on food safety.

Other jurisdictions appear to be recognizing the importance of a more comprehensive approach to animal health that includes the promotion of animal welfare. The European Union's new animal health strategy recognizes the importance of public health and food safety, economic costs, and animal welfare considerations. It is entitled *Prevention is Better Than a Cure* and has a key goal of promoting farm practices and animal welfare which prevent animal-related threats and minimize environmental impacts. It's interesting that environmental impacts are not even mentioned in this bill. Why is that?

Clearly, protecting animal health is about more than controlling diseases; it's about preventing diseases in the first place. This is more difficult, and as we have seen in our health care system, we are much better at responding to illnesses than preventing illness in the first place, as evidenced by the rising rate of chronic disease. It is clearly part of the genesis of this bill that it should contribute to the prevention of the disease as well as the control of the disease.

The OMAFRA June 18 discussion paper for the bill states:

"The proposed legislation would give the province clear authorities to protect and promote animal health. The main purpose would be to establish a framework for animal health management in Ontario that would provide for prevention measures, including enhanced efforts to protect animals from hazards; proper animal handling; and proper use of medicines....

"If introduced and passed, the proposed legislation would cover a broad range of hazards that could affect the health of animals—not just diseases." Emphasis: "not just diseases."

Under the title *Animal Health Promotion*, the paper reads: "The handling of farmed animals and the condition of their environment can have a direct impact on the health of the animals. The purpose of the regulation-making authority would be to promote adequate care and handling and facility standards for farmed animals in Ontario."

Given that the bill was intended to be about much more than responding to outbreaks—to be about preventing disease—it is a bit surprising that animal health promotion is not mentioned at all in this bill. It is also surprising that animal welfare is not mentioned more explicitly in the bill. The European strategy is clearly motivated by both public health concerns and animal welfare concerns.

There are other good reasons for the government to pay greater attention to farm animal welfare in this bill and more generally. One is economic. The market for humanely treated animal products is growing, and Ontario is in danger of failing to fully benefit from that market. There is also a growing concern about humane and healthy treatment of farm animals in North America as a whole. A 2003 Gallup poll found that nearly two thirds of Americans support passing strict laws concerning the treatment of farm animals. Even Oprah dedicated a show to food-animal care just recently. If it hits Oprah, it's big stuff.

The demand for cage-free eggs grew by 63% between 2001 and 2005 in the US. The demand for organic eggs grew by 85%. The potential for further growth is very significant. In western Europe, non-cage egg production has reached 35% while it comprises a mere 3% in Canada.

Europe is recognizing the health and economic gains of protecting animal welfare, as well as the ethical importance of doing so. In 2007, the EU banned veal crates, which are so small that a calf cannot turn around for most of its 16-week life—very cruel. Sow stalls, which keep pregnant pigs in such close confinement, they are virtually unable to move throughout their 16-week pregnancy, will be banned in the EU in 2013. Tethers, used to further restrict sows' movements, were prohibited in 2006. And the EU has agreed to ban battery cages for laying hens in 2012, stopping a practice that denies the birds virtually all of their natural behaviours and keeps them so cramped they cannot even flap a wing. All these systems and practices remain in use in Canada, where farm animal welfare is governed by an entirely voluntary, unaudited set of "recommended codes of practice."

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Farm animal welfare is also moving forward in the US. Citizens in California recently passed a ballot initiative that would ban battery cages, sow stalls and veal crates by 2015. Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Arizona and Maine have passed legislation banning intensive confinement systems.

Industry associations realize that these changes are in their interest. Smithfield Foods, the biggest pork producer in the US, is phasing out gestation crates. The

American Veal Association has urged an end to veal crates, and Safeway and Burger King have taken steps towards selling and using more cage-free eggs.

In Canada, we are falling far behind the movement to more humane animal treatment. A report by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies released earlier this year ranked Canada well behind Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the EU in terms of farm animal welfare. The report found that all these jurisdictions spent millions of dollars on animal welfare, while Canada's latest five-year agricultural plan virtually ignores this issue.

Some jurisdictions in Canada appear to be moving towards more comprehensive approaches to animal health that integrate public health and animal welfare concerns. The Newfoundland government has taken this approach and is updating its animal health and protection legislation. Its minister responsible has stated that the new legislation will ensure proper animal treatment and humane handling, as well as minimize the risks within the industry and for the public. So the segmented approach here in Ontario—separate public health and animal welfare—is a bit surprising.

A fourth issue with the bill relates to cost and compensation. What will it cost to implement the tracing system? Who will pay? How will this link to and avoid duplication with the federal system? What compensation will be provided for the culling of herds? We know that farmers are already hurting, hog farmers like Wayne Bartels, who faces bankruptcy in part because he didn't qualify for a government support program due to a clerical error, or other beginning hog farmers who are just starting out and who were excluded from the government's cattle, hog and horticultural payment program, even as retired, bankrupt and dead farmers—do you hear that, Madam Speaker? Bankrupt and dead farmers received support.

Will this bring on another set of burdensome regulations that are stacked against small farmers? How will the regulations be made to fit with small producers and organic producers? Will organic farmers continue to be compensated at the same level for killed animals, when organically raised animals have a market value of two to four times that of other animals?

There was a recent series of articles in the *Globe and Mail* about how Canada needs a new food strategy. I would say that Ontario needs a new food strategy, a strategy that rewards instead of punishes farmers for engaging in humane, healthy and environmentally friendly practices; a strategy that makes farming a viable undertaking again by building markets for domestic products; a strategy that supports farmers the way that we support our other manufacturing sectors.

Let's hope that this bill will be a launch pad for such a strategy rather than another set of regulations that punish innovative and growing sectors of the Ontario food economy.

Mr. Peter Shurman: On a point of order, Speaker: I wonder if we have a quorum present.

Interjection.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is not present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker ordered the bells rung.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Lisa Freedman): A quorum is now present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. You may continue.

Mr. Paul Miller: Thank you, Madam Speaker. Now that we've got a full House, I'm thrilled to begin again. Actually, the member interjected at a good time. I was right near the end, so it was very good timing.

All I can say is that obviously, once again, there are a lot of things that we would like to see differently, different amendments. We're hoping at the committee level that we'll be able to implement some of the suggestions from the third party and the official opposition because obviously a lot of their members have a lot of expertise in the farming community, and I think they should be tapped into. I feel that we will continue to hope that the government, in their infinite wisdom and their five members to our three, will see their way to listen to some of the good suggestions that might make this bill a little better and benefit the farmers and the people of Ontario. Their food supply is extremely important, and we can see how things are getting worse, with some of the things that have been coming in from other countries that we're forced to buy because we are not buying home-grown, which we should be doing. It might also help us in the future if we buy Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I appreciate the comments that were made by the member from Hamilton East-Stoney Creek—when the break occurred, I was just about getting writer's cramp taking notes here—and also the comments that were made by members earlier in the first go-round.

I'd like to remind everybody that the purpose of this act includes providing for the protection of animal health, establishing measures with respect to a broad range of hazards associated with animals that may affect animal health, human health or both, and regulating activities related to animals that may affect animal health, human health or both, and enhancing the safety of food and other products derived from animals that humans may consume.

A lot of comments have been made about whether the bill goes too far surrounding the regulations, things like that. I'd just like to remind everybody of the devastation that would occur to the agricultural sector if supports weren't in place. We know what happened with the outbreak of mad cow disease. The borders were shut down when that happened. It was a devastating loss to our whole agricultural sector. A member spoke earlier about the outbreak of H1N1 last week at a turkey farm. The process that was in place was followed. It was contained. We didn't hear about the whole sector being shut down.

This is what this bill is going to assist in doing: to make sure that the sector is secure; to make sure that the

containment and control of disease is in place. The member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek mentioned quarantines. It gives the authority to the chief veterinary officer to quarantine a farm, a section or a region to protect the farm and protect the sector. I think that's of ultimate importance to the agricultural sector, and I urge all members to support that because of the help it provides.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Jim Wilson: Responding to the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek and the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock and his comments, this bill is a 69-page bill. Much of the authority that's contained in here the federal government already has under its agencies, police already have, humane societies already have.

I think what we're hearing from the commodity groups and livestock groups like the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, the Ontario Cattlemen's Association and Ontario Pork—which is the hog producers, who are having a terrible financial crisis right now that the government has failed to respond to to any extent—is that they're worried about warrantless entries, which has been mentioned, and the tremendous new powers that government inspectors will have. I hope the only government inspectors who will be assigned to these cases or to complaints that come in are people who actually live on a farm or have grown up on a farm, because sometimes when you go out to the farm and you see the cattle being castrated and the tails being taken off, you might think that's cruel, but that's not cruel. That's called disease prevention. It's a necessary part of what cattlemen do.

Debeaking: It's not a very pleasant thing to debeak a bird, poultry, but it's done so they don't peck the heck out of each other and end up with sores and disease. Dehorning cattle for the same reason: It's not a very pleasant thing to see, but it's something that's necessary.

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Even factory farming—not all factory farms are bad. As the honourable member did mention, the European community is bringing in some pretty good standards to make sure abuse doesn't occur, or when it does occur, that people are penalized appropriately. Most of our food—not all of it's free-range chickens—comes from factory farms. That keeps the costs down, it keeps the production efficient, and they're not all bad. So what I'm saying is that people who are doing the inspections better know what farming is all about—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, I have the following question: Did the government go to the plowing match in Timiskaming just recently and announce anything having to do with this bill when it came to the good news—"news," new word; that's what happens when you get a flu. All my staff are sick and they're giving it to me.

Anyways, when they have the plowing match, there's an opportunity to give good news to the cattlemen and to

the farm community of Ontario, and if the government was so into this bill, why didn't they go to the plowing match and say something about it? I would suspect the reason they didn't is because they'd probably get an earful. I'm not saying that food safety is not important. That's not the point that I'm making here. The point that I'm trying to make is, you have a farm industry that is in crisis; you have people who are closing down farms because they can't afford to keep the doors open. Why? Because commodity prices are down; cost inputs are up; the American protectionism that we see in the United States is affecting us. We need to deal with all of those issues in some kind of way in order to be able to assist that industry.

What I want to say to my friend from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I'm pretty sure he would agree with me, is that this, in itself, may not be a bad thing. But is this what the farm industry needs today? I would venture to say, probably not. It doesn't mean to say that we shouldn't be doing this. I don't argue that for one second—I don't want to go on the record saying that we can't be doing any of this. That's not my point. My point is, the farm community is saying, "Okay. Nice bill; 69 pages—Bill 204. Somebody else is going to tell me how to run my farm, but what are you going to do to help me? Is there going to be anything when it comes to the issues of cost inputs, when it comes to me being able to operate my farm? Are you going to have some sort of rural electrical program in order to assist farmers to pay their hydro bills? Are you going to deal with the costs that are associated with all of the other regulations that you put in place?" I think the answer would be, "No." So I think the government has to go back and do a bit of work on this.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Randy Hillier: There's something else that we have to make mention of here. Of course, the original intent was supposed to be traceability, and traceability is not included at all; that's lost in the minutiae of the bureaucracy at some other point in time that none of us will see. However, all these 69 pages of animal health are a duplication of an existing bureaucracy. We have the CFIA federally; that's who's empowered to make sure that our farms and our herds are in good order so that we can export and that we can try to have a vibrant farm economy once again. So why are we adding additional cost and duplication of services?

We've all mentioned in here, the people who have come up and spoken today, that farming is in a difficult time. We talked about the hogs and cattle especially. What is this government doing for those farmers other than putting more bloody cost on them without putting any value out there—just putting more cost, duplicating bureaucracy, adding cost and not doing anything that will actually promote and help them? This is atrocious, that this government has their head so far buried into the bureaucracy and red tape that they can't see what to do at any time.

A couple of things: They will require the recording, the maintenance and reporting of specified information

related to any animal, animal product, blah blah blah. That's not going to help Wayne Bartels. That's not going to help any hog farm. Let's get on with doing the right thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd first like to thank the members who addressed my words.

The member from Simcoe–Grey is quite knowledgeable in the farming community as well, and I respect his opinion.

The member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock: I'm pleased that he was taking notes and paying attention to what the third party has to say. That's a refreshing change from the Liberals.

The member from Timmins–James Bay: I agree with him. That would have been a perfect place to announce the bill—at the plowing match. Maybe they would have met with some resistance. I don't know; I wasn't there. He was, and I guess that didn't happen. That might have been an ideal position for the Liberals to announce there. They would have had a captivated audience and a lot of people who would be—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Interested.

Mr. Paul Miller: —interested, and well-informed on the farming business.

Once again, the member from Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington always adds a good spark to the conversation, and he has his passion. He's also well aware of what goes on in the farming community in his area, and I'm sure that he will add to the discussions when it goes to committee.

All I can say is that every bill that's brought forward requires some changes and amendments to make it a better bill. But unfortunately, since I've been here, I've seen on so many occasions at committee that it falls on deaf ears. They don't even read the bill. They just plow ahead. I don't want to use the term “plow ahead” because it's a farm term, but I guess I will. They plow ahead with their ideas and they don't even consider some of the good input that comes from all sectors of our society.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order: I would like introduce Mr. Crozier's twin brother, who is here with us in the galleries today. I'd like to welcome him to the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): That's not a point of order, but—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm delighted to have some time here to talk about Bill 204.

Before I go to some of my comments, I just want to go back and revisit what this legislation, Bill 204, proposes to do.

I heard from a previous speaker that nobody wants this. Well, the proposed legislation is something that our industry partners have been asking for to protect animal

health and to focus on livestock and the poultry sector, to strengthen consumer confidence in supporting this great economy.

Ontario is the last jurisdiction in this country to introduce such a piece of legislation. So, once again, why are we doing this? Every other province has a piece of legislation.

The proposed legislation, if passed, would provide measures to assist in the prevention, detection and control of animal diseases and other hazards. This will give government the authority to issue quarantine, surveillance zone and control area orders to help control the spread of any detected diseases and hazards.

I heard from a previous speaker that this is more bureaucracy. If they would look at the piece of legislation, it actually repeals three previous acts and incorporates them into one. What that does—we talk about reducing red tape. We're bringing in one piece of legislation that's going to encompass those three others.

We have worked hard to incorporate these things. There has been an enormous amount of—we had some huge consultations, and I'm going to talk about those partners later on.

The industry partners, which I will talk to more specifically later, have sent us some written support, and I'm going to talk about those in just a minute—the ones that the folks who previously spoke said were totally against this piece of legislation.

1700

There's still work to be done. There's no question about it. They've rolled up their sleeves not only to initiate us to move forward with this but to work with us to get it right. There will be public consultation. This will enhance the ability to work with the cattlemen's association. With the great program they have already for traceability, this will give us another tool to better enhance that.

Our government has been very clear that the federal government would like to move forward on a mandatory traceability system for livestock and poultry, as was announced this summer. The system will have to be supported, of course, by the federal government. Traceability is an important part of containing disease outbreaks and other food safety concerns. It has important economic impacts because processors, retailers and consumers want quality and food safety assurance and standards that show that food is safe.

I'm going to talk about some of those supports that have worked with government to strengthen this bill to move forward. We've heard today that the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council plays an important role when it comes to food safety in this province. We thank them for their support. I'm going to quote from their letter that was dated July 20, just after this legislation was introduced. And yes, they have some suggestions to further strengthen it.

Let me just tell you what they said: “The Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council ... was formed in 2005 to provide a forum to facilitate the development and co-

ordination of an Ontario strategy to deal with foreign animal disease and other transmissible livestock and poultry diseases. There are currently 28 regular members and five ex-officio members of OLPC, including livestock and poultry groups, farm service, feed, processing and veterinary organizations. The membership list is attached...." That's the scope of this organization; it really encompasses the agricultural industry.

"The OLPC members were very pleased with the June 18 announcement of the Ontario government plans to move forward on farm animal health and traceability initiatives. We feel provincial animal health legislation would provide ... required tools to manage disease outbreaks and other incidents that threaten the integrity of the food supply, animal and human health....

"We commend the vital role the Minister of Agricultural, Food and Rural Affairs has played in moving this important initiative forward while ensuring agriculture stakeholders were kept informed and provided with an opportunity to provide input." That's what, in general, the Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council said.

I have also heard about costs. I'm not sure where the costs come from. As a matter of fact, the legislation is very clear that it provides an opportunity, when there's loss of animals due to quarantine or destruction for disease not to spread, for a compensation component as part of this legislation. It's there.

Let me tell you some of the general comments that the OLPC group has put together: "Overall, the OLPC is in agreement with the suggested scope and content of the proposed animal health legislation for Ontario."

Let me tell you what they say about the mandatory reporting hazards: "Overall, OLPC is very supportive of the outlined purpose and scope of the mandatory reporting component in relation to the designated animal disease."

I want to be clear: As I mentioned before, they do make suggestions on how to strengthen this through the consultation process.

"OLPC is in general agreement with the response powers outlined in the proposal."

Let me tell you what they say about disease prevention: "OLPC is very pleased to see disease and risk prevention included as a central component of the act." These are statements that are not our statements. We were able to work together with these folks.

It doesn't stop there. When it comes to animal health promotion: "We endorse the inclusion of animal health promotion within the legislation if the intent is to address the issue of animal welfare or humane treatment of animals within the context of an emergency." This is something that they have asked for.

"OLPC agrees with the premise of this section of the proposal and expects industry consultation in the development of related regulations." That was in reference to livestock medicine.

When it comes to information collection used in disclosure, one of the things we've heard previous members say is that inspectors have arbitrary means to go in and

inspect. Well, "OLPC supports the general statements contained in this section of the proposal: Establish regulations or programs which allow the collection, use and sharing of aggregate disease information from veterinarians and laboratories for the purposes of disease monitoring."

We've heard about the turkey infestation. We didn't need this piece of legislation because those folks acted responsibly, but we know that in the past, mad cow disease and some others spread because we didn't have the proper controls in place.

They also suggest that we "develop regulations to provide for a notification system for disease outbreaks or risk incidents and a single provincial source of information on confirmed or suspected incidents that could be used by industry."

This is what they've suggested be in the legislation. We're proceeding. So when I hear that industry is totally not supportive, I'm not sure where that information is coming from.

On third party delegation and delivery, and once again I'm quoting from their letter, "OLPC agrees that the legislation should contain the provision for third party administration of certain portions of the act and/or regulations under the oversight of the ministry." This, once again, is their recommendation.

We talked about the cost. None of the previous members who spoke about this and who oppose this piece of legislation disclosed where these additional costs are. As a matter of fact, they talk about an extra burden, yet entrenched in legislation there is a portion where we talk about compensation being allowed under certain circumstances.

Let me tell you what the Chicken Farmers of Ontario are telling us about this legislation. This is a letter addressed to the minister. It says, "Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the Ontario Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs proposed animal health legislation. Chicken Farmers of Ontario congratulates you and your government on this significant milestone." This is not something that I'm saying and that some of my colleagues are saying—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Read the rest of it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Yes. They do make good suggestions.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Exactly. Read the rest of it.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me just read something else that they say: "We appreciate that the consuming public looks to government for oversight and welcome this legislation in response to that demand." So they're saying that for the betterment of the industry, and certainly consumers are always asking about this—we know that Ontario has one of the safest food chains anywhere probably in the world, but this sort of puts the seal of approval that gives that extra assurance so that we have confidence in the food that we consume every day.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: "But, but, but"—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I make no comment. The member is saying "But, but, but." I do say that they've worked

with us and are willing to continue to work with us. I have never heard this member say anything positive about what these groups have said, so I think they should really—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oh, no, I said all of those things.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me tell you what the OFA in general, in one sentence, says, and they do make good suggestions. I pre-empt them before I quote them: “The OFA supports the goal of this proposed legislation, ‘to enhance the competitiveness of Ontario’s agriculture-food industry and further safeguard the province from the negative health and economic impacts associated with animal health events.’”

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Are you going to accept the amendments your PA is going to make?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We are listening to them, Madam Speaker, and this bill is going to go to committee, like any other bill.

I can tell you that we have a lot of confidence in that industry. Being parliamentary assistant to the minister for the last three and a half years, I’ve met with a lot of those groups. They’re the hardest-working folks in rural Ontario and work night and day to provide, as I said before, good, sustainable, safe food for us.

I know when I meet with my local federation, my local cattlemen’s association, they’ve always been very, very helpful. I respect them for that assistance that they’ve given us.

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“The Ontario Cattlemen’s Association was pleased on June 18 to hear that the Ontario government plans to move forward on farm animal health and traceability initiatives. We support the proposed legislation as a necessary tool for government and industry to manage disease outbreaks that threaten the integrity of the food supply, as well as animal and human health.”

Mr. Jim Wilson: Read the rest of the letter.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I hear my colleague saying, “Read the rest.” As I said before, they do make good comments and they do make some suggestions. This is the time when the bill will go to committee and we’ll get that industry—

Interjections.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: —as we’ve done those things. We appreciate the comments they have given us in writing for the minister and the ministry and the committee to suggest. This is not uncommon, when legislation is introduced and it goes to committee, that different interest groups send the committee members and the minister suggestions and recommendations. We take those very, very seriously.

When I hear that this was sneaked through somehow, well, those folks that I mentioned were all consulted. These are the folks who are in the trenches, on the side roads, on those county roads, on those concession roads in municipalities that I represent and all the members from rural Ontario represent. So the consultation has happened.

When we hear that this has been somehow snuck through the back door, it’s hard to take. I repeat, every province has this piece of legislation. Ontario is the only jurisdiction in this country that doesn’t have such a piece of legislation. We looked very closely, for example, at what Alberta and Quebec have done, and we’ve taken on the good work that they’ve already done, instead of reinventing the wheel.

To say, once again, that this is something out of the blue, that it doesn’t fit what the industry wants—I think industry wants a government that has the proper tools to protect their industry, because God forbid if we have another incident like mad cow or any of those things that happen within the confines of the agricultural industry, and the long-term impacts that they have, and we have known very well that there are tools that we could have implemented to prevent those things from happening, and we haven’t done it.

So it’s a little bit rich to say that this is out of the ordinary, it’s overpowering and it creates more red tape when, as a matter of fact, as I mentioned in one of my opening statements, we’re actually repealing three acts right now—the Bees Act, the Livestock Community Sales Act and the Livestock Medicines Act—because they will be well incorporated in this new piece of legislation under one package with one set of controls, one set of regulations or regulations that we’ll develop in conjunction with our stakeholders.

I’m going to end my remarks by just saying this is an integral part of moving forward. We do have, in general—and I say in general; I want to be fair—from the industry to move forward with this. At the end of the day, by the time we get to the end of the process, I would think that we will have a good solid piece of legislation that our industry can depend on and, most important, that our consumers can depend on. Because as we move forward together with the federal government and new labelling that identifies Canadian products and maybe Ontario products, when people go to the grocery store, regardless of where they are, they’ll be able to identify these foods that they know that the government has taken action on to make sure that they’re safe and protected.

I would encourage all the members of this House, yes, to give us input; yes, to understand that this is something that the industry has been asking for; and yes, that this is something that we consulted with the industry on. I look forward, once again, to going to committee, to have a full, wholesome debate at committee, to hear from those industry stakeholders and move on and get this done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments.

Mr. Randy Hillier: It’s unfortunate that the member from Northumberland-Quinte West didn’t actually read the legislation before he spoke about it. He was saying that there is no red tape, there is no cost. Read section 24. I’ll just read you one little section here under section 24—and there’s a host of them: “Establish restrictions on the possession, storage, transportation, movement or distribution of living or dead animals, animal products,

animal byproducts, inputs, fomites, waste material, conveyances ... including requiring permits to be obtained before any such activity may take place."

The member for Northumberland should understand that the requirement of permits is itself a cost: a cost in time and a cost in money. Just in that one little example, any movement of any live or dead animal or any product of that live or dead animal is going to require a permit. So there is a cost.

That is their typical Liberal response to anything at all: Apply more costs, more burdens, more red tape, more administration, as a way to solve the problem, without realizing that they are creating a problem. They're looking to improve the health of our animals. Well, why don't you start thinking of improving the health of our farmers? We're going to have a whole lot of healthy animals and a bunch of dead farms under this Liberal administration. That's what we're going to have: dead farms, healthy animals.

Earlier, a member said we have to help stop the spread of disease. Well, I'd like to see us stop the spread of this Liberal disease called red tape and over-restriction and intrusiveness on the people and the farms of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I always love listening to Mr. Hillier, because it's always an interesting perspective that he brings to these debates, and sometimes he's maybe not too far from the mark. I know members at times will say, "Oh, well, you know, he's being a little bit alarmist," but I think the point is well made—and I've raised this earlier: Is food safety important? Absolutely. Should we, as a Legislature, be trying to figure out how to make sure that the public is made safe when it comes to the food chain? Absolutely. Nobody argues that. The issue, however, is, is that all we can say to the farm community? There are plenty of issues that are challenges to the farm community. I guess the point that Mr. Hillier made, and I think I would agree with it, is, where's the rest of the package that's there to assist the farm community? There's nothing wrong with trying to deal with food safety. It's a very important issue. Talk to those people who unfortunately have lost family members and loved ones as a result of the food safety incidents that we had last year. So I'm not arguing that for two seconds. Does this bill do everything it's supposed to do? I'll talk about that later in the debate. But the basic core issue is: Where is the rest of the assistance to the farm community? I don't see any.

I talk to people like Frank Haasen, who has been a farmer in our community for years, along with his family; I talk to John Vanthof, who was our previous candidate in Timiskaming-Cochrane, who is a dairy farmer; I talk to people across my riding who are in the agricultural business, and I'll tell you, a lot of people are hurting. There are huge issues when it comes to debt, and not just because of debt that they've incurred to buy equipment and to pay the mortgage, but debt that they've

got to incur on their lines of credit because commodity prices have gone down, hydro prices have gone up, other inputs have gone up. And they're saying, "We need the provincial government to assist us." If we can assist the automotive sector, certainly to God we can do something to assist the farm community. That's the point that I think we're trying to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I appreciate the opportunity to make a comment to my colleague and friend from Northumberland—Quinte West.

To be sure, if one raises the decibels and the rhetoric, it must be true. I guess that's the way it works. But the member always approaches in a balanced way the discussion that has been taking place. It's unfortunate that there's this mythical red tape argument that continually kind of weaves its way in and out, in and out. The very careful use of red tape got us fired water inspectors, it got us fired meat inspectors, under the guise of, "It's all a bunch of red tape, and we don't need it."

1720

Quite frankly, the member from Timmins—James Bay does hit the nail right on the head: This is about safety. The rhetoric that's being thrown out there, it's unfortunate that it's not at least balanced. That's why I appreciate the member's comments, because he talked about the balance between the consultations before the bill and during the bill, and indicated clearly that when the committee comes to work, there will be continuation of that consultation with the stakeholders.

As a matter of fact, we've got farmers right here in this House from all sides—from all sides. The discussion has always been about being very proud—and I mentioned this before, in the debates earlier—of Ontario's record when it does come to safety. Food safety is a source of pride for our farmers. They have not indicated that they don't want to work with the government. As a matter of fact, as stated by the member, they are going to go in the other direction: They want to work with the government, and they will work with the government.

One could stand up and raise the decibels and raise the rhetoric, but I think the member has done a good job of a balanced approach, and I appreciate it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Oxford.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just wanted to comment on the presentation made by the member from Northumberland—Quinte West. I would say that the Conservative caucus is supportive of food safety. The compendium that came with the bill, which outlined what the intent of the bill was: I think we would all agree with that. But as he was making his presentation, he was reading the comments from a lot of the stakeholders in the agriculture community. But he neglected to mention the "buts" in the letters. He just said, "Well, yes, they have some other good recommendations." I think it would have been helpful in the discussion if those recommendations that they were making—I believe each

and every one of them had a recommendation beyond, "We support this legislation, but we would like to make these changes." Had he put those in there so we could be debating that, with those changes made, the Conservative caucus would likely be supporting this legislation.

So far, we've heard about going to committee with the bill, having discussions about the bill and hearing from everybody, but no one on the government side seems to want to say, "And then we would implement the changes that are recommended. We would support the amendments coming forward to make the bill what all these stakeholders are telling us needs to be done."

As an example, I think it's very important that all the stakeholders' recommendations deal with wanting the food safety bill in place, including traceability. Being able to confine where an outbreak takes place—the member spoke about the BSE problem we had a number of years ago. If you can't identify where the product came from, it doesn't matter how well you confine the area. You can't export any material from anywhere in the country because you can't define where the affected area is. We have to have the traceability in place before this act is going to be beneficial to our agriculture community.

I would like to see something in the bill that does more than say the minister can, by regulation, set up a traceability regime. I'd like to see—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member from Northumberland—Quinte West has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Let me thank the folks who made comments, with the exception of maybe one. I certainly respect the rest of them, but somebody who believes law and order should be a backhoe at the end of somebody's driveway to stop the police, I don't give a lot of credibility to. But I do appreciate the other members' comments, and they're valid.

I think I made it very, very clear, talking about the bill, that there were a lot of good suggestions. There are a lot of good suggestions. That's when the bill goes to committee.

These letters were written to government after the legislation was passed. They thanked us for letting them give input. That's why we're here today. Basically they said that it's about time this has come forward.

I made no bones about it; I think I said that upfront: We will be listening, and the bill will go to committee. Like normal, there will be amendments, presumably, and we strongly—listen, it is about food safety. But the problem is when I hear, "Well, it's good about food safety, but we have to have a regime in place to make sure we achieve that food safety."

We talked about the farmers needing help; there's no question about it. I'll go as far as saying that the majority of the governments that have been in power have worked with the agricultural community. We've seen the support that this government has given to the agricultural community, and I'm talking financial support. The previous governments have as well. But I would say—

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Oh, don't go there. Don't go there.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I will go there. Who closed OMAF offices across this province that were helping farmers? Ernie, you were there. So don't go there. Don't you go there, Ernie.

All I'm saying is, we're listening. We're listening, but we're not listening to them, Madam Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Jim Wilson: It's amazing how the Liberal members believe their own rhetoric. I know that support for farmers is at an all-time low in the province. We certainly have hog producers in the province—in my riding, I can think of many families who are personal friends that are bankrupt or are going bankrupt, or their houses are for rent or their farms are for rent up around the Alliston area, the Angus area, and down near Tottenham. It's a terrible time out there and there has been no response to their particular plight from the provincial government, other than to say that they're talking to the federal government. When it's raised in this House, the agriculture minister simply blames the federal government, who have provided at least some cheques to these farmers to help them survive to the extent that they are at this point.

Secondly, \$1 billion at eHealth is a heck of a lot more than you spend on agriculture in this province and it's a heck of a lot more than you've spent since 2003 on agriculture in this province. So to get up and to think you're able to say that you're great supporters of agriculture is a bit of a joke.

I do want to talk about Bill 204, though, the Animal Health Act, 2009. I'm going to begin by reiterating what some other members of the PC caucus have said in regard to this bill because it's important for Ontarians to know that we support in principle the protection of our food supply and animal health. The honourable member from Oxford just said that.

Ontario's agricultural industry is among the best in the world, and we should be very proud and supportive of it. We should also be better informed about it. As our friends at the Ontario Federation of Agriculture tell us, the agri-food industry—its farmers, processors, wholesalers and retailers—provided over 752,000 jobs in Ontario in 2006, which are the latest statistics. I would think that there are fewer jobs there now. This translated at the time to 11.6% of Ontario's employment. In 2006, Ontario farmers spent \$7.8 billion to be able to produce food and received \$8.4 billion from the marketplace for their products. Food and beverage products generated \$24.1 billion in annual food store sales. In fact, more than 200 commodities are produced in Ontario, including fruits, vegetables, livestock, honey, dairy, poultry, grains and oilseeds. When it comes to our agricultural industry, we definitely have something to be thankful for and something to be proud of, but they do need our help.

Having said that, this bill goes beyond the scope of what the farming community has asked for. It creates

additional bureaucratic red tape—the last thing our farmers need more of. This bill started as a traceability bill. As was just said by the member from Oxford, if you have a breakout of BSE or some other horrible disease affecting your livestock, you need to be able to trace back where that stock originated so that the whole problem can be dealt with. There's only one little section in this bill that mentions that the minister will have the authority to put in a traceability system, but when she is asked about it publicly, she says, "We're going to leave it up to the federal government." So there's no leadership from the province on the whole reason that this bill was thought up in the first place.

You'll hear later, when I read some remarks from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, that they didn't want—and the member for Northumberland—Quinte West read a part of a letter from the Ontario Cattlemen's Association. I'll read you the other part of the letter, which says, "We didn't want an animal welfare act. That's not what we were told this was going to be." But we have almost 70 pages of an animal welfare act with no mention, or very little mention, of the original intent of the act, which was traceability, to deal with crisis, to make sure we could continue to export our products in the agricultural sector in the international markets and to make sure that other countries, of course, had confidence in our products; if a disease broke out, that we would be able to deal with that emergency.

Instead, we've got huge new costs, a huge amount of new paperwork for farmers. The permit system alone that was mentioned by Mr. Hillier is just mind-boggling. People move their cattle and their chickens and their pigs every day, but apparently you've got to go to the bureaucratic office and get permits now to move things around. The dangers here and the costs here are far more than what the farming community bargained for. So it's nice that you read the first part of every letter, which says, "Thank you for introducing this bill," but you've got to read the other four or five pages of, as Mr. Hardeman, the member for Oxford, said, the "buts." And the butts are significant from the major groups that we're hearing from in agriculture that will be affected by this.

1730

Also, it has been mentioned by many, many colleagues that the timing of this bill couldn't be more harmful in terms of new costs and red tape, which can't be emphasized enough, and just a whole set of new burdens and bureaucracy on top of our farmers, who are not doing very well. You talk about, "Maybe they'll get some compensation for some of the livestock removal they'll have to do, or if they have to kill their entire flock or they have to kill all their livestock because of disease," but there's no mention in this bill.

I don't trust you on the compensation side of it. We had a tornado, as honourable members know because I've raised it in this House several times, that not only devastated Durham and parts of west Grey and Vaughan, but also the Town of the Blue Mountains. I had two ministers come up, the Minister of Natural Resources and

the Minister of Agriculture, eight days after the tornado, which happened on August 20, two months ago. They came up and they toured 14 farms that are majorly affected; they are apple farmers that are affected. Probably close to \$4 million in damage won't be covered by existing programs, so they need disaster relief; they need your government to ask the federal government to open up the cost-shared program called agri-recovery, which would allow some of these farmers to tap into compensation.

So they come up, the ministers go on the evening news, they get interviewed by the local papers, they say all the right things. Three weeks ago I asked Mr. Smitherman, the Deputy Premier, a question. It was for the Premier but he wasn't there that day, so Mr. Smitherman said all the right things. He reminded us that his mother lives in Ravenna, which is right in the middle of the tornado-damaged area, an F2 tornado, in the Town of the Blue Mountains. He says all the right things. I wait three weeks. He has not called me. He has not sent one of his umpteen staff members over to ask, "What can I do? What kind of compensation do these farmers need?" Mrs. Dombrowsky, the Minister of Agriculture, has not called me since she toured almost two months ago. I've had to talk to her deputy. I've had to talk to the principal secretary of cabinet, Shelly Jamieson, whom I've known for a couple of decades, to get any action at all from the government. Ms. Cansfield, the Minister of Natural Resources—very nice people—said all the right things, but again, you don't follow up.

So if there's going to be compensation in this bill, we need to see that up front so that farmers know that if they have to—because this bill requires them to kill their livestock or remove diseased stock. Farmers need to know that the government is going to be there for them.

I will read what the cattlemen's association did say, because the member for Northumberland—Quinte West read a letter. This one is from Gord Hardy, who is president of the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, on July 20 of this year. It goes on about traceability, which I'll put on the record in a minute, what they would like to see in this act or in a traceability system.

"Animal health promotion," the point that I was making there in terms of how they didn't really want this act to become one of those: It says that the Ontario Cattlemen's Association "believes that animal welfare practices should not be included in the proposed legislation," which is what everybody has been debating. "How are the little calves going to get looked after, their welfare?" and, "We're going to hire new inspectors to go in and arrest bad farmers." By the way, I've never met a bad farmer in all of my life. I know there are some out there, I guess, but I thought really what you were looking at is more animal welfare like puppy mills and stuff like that. The vast majority of farmers are not bad farmers. It's not in their interests to be cruel to their animals, because animals that are under threat or distress don't produce very well. They don't taste very good and they tend to toughen up a little bit, as members would know.

So it's not in anyone's interest to go around being mean to their animals.

But anyway, you're going to bring in a whole new bureaucracy. As my colleague behind me said, there already is a federal bureaucracy whose whole job it is, the Canadian Food Inspection Agency, to do exactly this, and by international standards they do a good job.

The Ontario Cattlemen's Association said that, in their view, the OSPCA Act, which was recently updated, "has ample authority to deal with animal welfare issues. The beef industry also has a code of practice for the care and handling of beef cattle, a joint effort between industry and agriculture and Agri-Food Canada. We feel these policy tools provide adequate care and handling standards during normal business. Should the legislation focus specifically on the care and handling of animals during a declared emergency, we request these standards be science-based, and correspond to already existing protocols. The Ontario Farm Animal Council should be consulted regarding animal welfare and animal health promotion." I have a letter from the Ontario Farm Animal Council that I should also read.

"Compensation and Indemnification Policies" is part 7 of this letter from Mr. Hardy. It says:

"We request the development of a regulation relating to fair compensation or indemnification policies for direct and specified indirect losses for any producers whose animals have been ordered destroyed by government, or whose income has suffered as a result of a disease outbreak. This could include losses from quarantine, extra-feeding costs, lost market value due to weight or age discounts, testing costs and disposal costs. Adequate compensation for producers who experience ongoing prevention and detection costs that cannot be recovered from the marketplace as well as for quick response costs are essential to keeping the Ontario cattle industry competitive."

I also want to go back to section 4 of this July 20 letter from Mr. Hardy and the Ontario Cattlemen's Association, a section called "Disease Prevention, Control and Monitoring." It says:

"OCA, OVA, OSMA and the Ontario Dairy Goat Co-Operative have recently embarked upon a project to identify the biosecurity gaps along the supply chain of each commodity, from farm to retail. Only once these gaps are identified will these industries be able to move forward with implementation. We request that any biosecurity standards are determined by the commodity groups in conjunction with government and other industry stakeholders. The standards should be science-based and consider the economic impact on the industry, and must not result in the industry becoming non-competitive when compared with other jurisdictions.

"OCA"—the cattlemen's association—"also believes that the legislation needs to facilitate access to farm veterinary services in underserved areas of the province, including financial support where necessary," and we've seen those requests come recently from parts of northern Ontario, where they don't have vets and they

have to fly in vets, and we've not seen a good response from the government on that front.

They also want the province to "have an adequate veterinary disease surveillance network ... so that producers have access to pharmaceuticals for animal health. OCA initiated a meeting of stakeholders in February" of this year "to discuss the regional large animal veterinary shortage, with financial support from OMAFRA." They didn't get it too much for the vets, but they got a bit of money to have a meeting.

They are calling upon the government to deal with some of these issues that are not dealt with and that they thought would be dealt with when this legislation was being talked about and drafted.

I also wanted to just put on the record, because I told them I would, some comments from the Ontario Federation of Agriculture in a letter dated July 17, 2009, from Bette Jean Crews, the president. Under a section called "Mandatory Reporting," which deals with red tape, she writes:

"The OFA recognizes that immediate reporting of certain animal health hazards is a crucial first step to organizing a response to an emergency and minimizing the negative impacts to the agricultural sector.

"Producers, however, are already subject to considerable administrative and reporting responsibilities. These administrative responsibilities impose considerable costs that are not necessarily reflected in the price received by the producer. As such, any reporting may be seen as a potential and significant burden.

"The OFA strongly recommends that the ministry establish a mechanism for mandatory reporting that does not invoke significant additional costs and does not contribute to further burden. To do so, a comprehensive mechanism for compensation should be developed and readily available."

Again, you're going down a road with this legislation with no assurances that costs are going to be covered or recoverable. As another one of the livestock groups has said, "We're going to do all this for the public good, and we don't mind doing it, but we're not going to get paid for it. The public isn't going to be paying us in an increase at the wholesale level to help compensate us for all this new red tape and new costs that will have to be put in place for reporting and surveillance and removal of dead animals."

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Going on with the OFA letter, "Costs in need of compensation would include all direct costs (destruction of animals) and indirect costs such as the implicit costs of quarantine, testing, animal disposal and clean-up of facilities." How can they trust you when you guys took away, not too long ago, the fee for the disposal of dead cattle? Farmers used to be compensated. For some unknown reason, because it's not a huge budget item in the overall scheme of things, you decided to pick on farmers. You've made no other significant cuts to deal with the deficit, but you took away—what do we call it, Ernie?—the animal disposal fee and the cattle disposal fee in most cases.

Speaker, I will get through this.

They don't have much faith in the Liberal government that they're going to be compensated for any of the new costs since some of their old regular costs you're no longer covering under a program that was in place for probably 75 to 100 years.

Anyway, "Rates for compensation must be realistic with regard to animal value and must include provisions to cover non-traditional livestock, such as farmed deer and elk.

"Response to animal health events," in the three minutes I have left: "The OFA agrees that a rapid response to an animal health emergency is essential to protecting human health, maintaining economic stability within the agricultural sector and ensuring consumer confidence in Ontario's food supplies.

"It is essential that any new legislation recognize the Office of the Chief Veterinarian of Ontario ... as a definitive authority during an animal health emergency. The OCVO must be given equal consideration, along with officials such as the emergency management coordinator and the Ontario medical officer of health, as part of any coordinated response to a disease outbreak or other animal health emergency."

Then, "Traceability: The OFA insists that farmers not be forced to bear the cost of regulations that result in a public benefit. Although we are not aware of a definitive cost-benefit analysis, we believe trace-back systems will provide more benefit to the consumer than the farmer. Costs associated with introducing traceability must have a mechanism to enable implementation costs to be transmitted down the market chain to be absorbed by the consumer or otherwise covered by government assistance programs.

"Traceability initiatives should be specific to and designed compatibly with individual commodity circumstances. They should move forward so as to not put Ontario animal producers at a competitive disadvantage relative to other national or international producers. Legislation must recognize only certain sectors will benefit from provincial-level traceability programs, while other sectors would benefit from being organized under national and perhaps international traceability programs. Traceability initiatives should be driven by demand and should be reflective of each commodity group's capacity to adopt best practices and standards.

"Should regulations governing traceability become mandatory, any proposed traceability systems must be flexible to accommodate existing programs and any programs currently being proposed by commodity groups."

I have much, much more that I wanted to put on the record for some of these great farm groups that we have, but I'm not only running out of voice; I'm running out of time.

We want to keep our farmers or at least bring them back to the days when we had sustainable farming and we had prosperous farmers. We have always said on environmental fronts that prosperous farmers will keep

farmland in production and prosperous farmers will look after their animals well and have the means to do so, so animal welfare—all of this depends on making sure that the government is there to support and not hinder our farming community.

From what I've read, and I've read quite a bit from agricultural groups with respect to this legislation, they're very uncertain about what the government's true intentions are. They're very worried that this is another Big Brother bill from the Liberal government of Ontario that deals with issues that are not a significant problem in the farming community and that the OSPCA and other policing agencies have the ability to deal with now.

I'd say that the farmers I've talked to—those who are still in business—are really worried about the costs and the red tape, and they don't feel that the government really understands what they're going through now and the new burdens that are being placed upon them, should this legislation pass.

So I would ask the government, as other honourable members have, to make sure that this gets a full hearing. I would hope you would come to the riding of Simcoe-Grey and not just go to Barrie or whatever, which you often do up my way. I'd like you to come to Collingwood or Creemore or Stayner or Alliston, the potato capital of Ontario, and actually hear from the people who will be forced to deal with this legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to just make a couple of comments to the member from Simcoe-Grey. He raises, I think, what is essential to part of this debate, and that is, there are those who may not be enamoured with this legislation, as far as food safety, but I think most members in this House would agree that we need to have some regime in order to toughen up food safety rules so that we don't have a repeat of what we've seen in the listeriosis cases of last year and some of the other cases that we've seen as of late in regard to the whole issue of food handling and the dangers that exist to the public when it comes to consuming some of the processed foods that we eat in our food chain, and obviously a big part of that is what happens on the farm. But I think the point that he makes is a good one, and that is, there's a whole lot of hurting going on in the farm community. There are a lot of people struggling to keep the farm gates open. There are family farms that have been in the families for two, three, four generations that are in danger of closing down, and those families are looking to this Legislature and this province for some assistance. They're not asking that we throw oodles of money out the back of the truck and throw money at the problem. They want the provincial government and this Legislature to address the very serious concerns that the farm community is facing. There is the whole issue of supply management that we need to make sure we deal with when it comes to some of the concerns around supply management that need to be strengthened. There's the whole issue of inputs, as far as costs that affect the operation of a farm, which people are

really worried about. There's the whole issue of what has happened to the market in many cases, especially in the hog industry. This government is not seen as responding to those crises, so a lot of people in the farm community are saying, "Okay, this is fine, but what about all the other stuff?" I think that's the point he was trying to make.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I would like to thank the member from Simcoe-Grey and the member from Timmins-James Bay for providing further insight into this. Once again, I am taking notes and trying to keep up with things.

A lot has been talked about. It would seem, from some of the comments that were made throughout this afternoon, that this government has done little for farmers, but I'd just like to remind people that since 2003, the government has provided over \$1.5 billion in farm income support programs; our government has committed more than \$50 million to its Pick Ontario Freshness strategy; we have increased the number of meat inspectors from 10 to 170. In 2007, the McGuinty government announced a three-year risk management program to support the grain and oilseed sector. Through this program, \$50 million has been provided to farmers to date. Since 2003, through the rural economic development program, 240 projects have been approved, for a total provincial commitment of over \$77.5 million. We signed a new 10-year agreement with the University of Guelph in the spring of 2008 to provide \$300 million over the next five years to help it continue its top-notch agri-food and rural research development programs.

We talked about consultation, and comments have been made this afternoon that this has been rushed through. Consultations on this were first begun in 2006, with consultations with the industry and looking for what the industry was looking for. We've done a lot of work on this. Further consultations came forward in the spring. I have a list of the agricultural organizations that were consulted: Ontario Livestock and Poultry Council, Association of Ontario Chicken Processors, Chicken Farmers of Ontario, Canadian Coalition for Farm Animals, Canadians for Ethical Treatment of Food Animals, Canadian Federation of Humane Societies, College of Veterinarians of Ontario. These are just a few of the organizations that we have spoken to.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?
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Mr. Randy Hillier: We see all these little letters trumped up here; I want to give you a personal story of a neighbour of mine. His name is Larry Robinson; unfortunately he passed away about a year or so ago. Larry Robinson and his wife have a poultry farm and they ship chicks across the country. I sat in with Larry one day. He was very annoyed and stressed about the mandatory reporting requirements for selling eggs and day-old chicks across this country. He told me that 50%

of his day is spent doing paperwork for some level of government or for some level of farm organization; 50% of every hour of every day on that farm was spent doing mandatory reporting. Is there a cost? Absolutely, there is a cost.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Give me a break, Randy.

Mr. Randy Hillier: There is a cost—listen, this is truthful. He had to list down the individual's name, where the individual lived, identification to prove where he lived—on and on it went with—between the CFIA, the Egg Farmers of Ontario, the borders, there are all kind of levels. Now what is the solution? "Let's add a little bit more." Add some more. Come on: 50%—one day, just one day. I'm sure there's somebody on the Liberal side who has some clarity of thought who can come up with a piece of legislation that is not going to add cost, time and money, and invade the privacy of people. Surely you can come up with some legislation that will be good.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to commend the member from Simcoe-Grey for his presentation. Just from my comments to the previous speaker, I was happy to see that the member from Simcoe-Grey did look at the letters that came from stakeholders that pointed out the amendments that were required in order to make this bill acceptable to the stakeholders. So I thank him for doing that.

I also wanted to talk to the issue of the costs that the government side was purporting didn't exist. In the presentation that I made to this Legislature last week when this bill was introduced, it dealt with the section that my colleague was mentioning, about the issuing of permits and licences; I think that's the word for fees and charges to the farmers who have to apply for these things. It wasn't bad enough that the section is there for the licences and fees, but then in the warrantless entry section of the bill, it also gives the inspectors the ability to go into the premises just to inspect to make sure that proper licences are posted. If we look at other areas in our society where we have licences posted, when the government inspector comes in he usually comes in to check to make sure all the facilities are in order and then he issues a bill for the service having been provided. They inspect to make sure that all the licences are on the wall without a warrant. I think that's another area that really needs amendment. As we go to committee, we hope that the government would consider amendments to those parts of the bill that are not going to work and are going to create more red tape and cost to farmers that they do not need.

Again, I want to reiterate that the issue of food safety and the health and welfare of our animals and our people—there is nothing more important than that, but there is no need to add a whole host of new licence fees and inspection fees in order to make that work. I think we need to make sure that the job is done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Simcoe-Grey has two minutes to respond.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank the honourable members who did respond to my comments: Timmins–James Bay, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington, and Oxford. I just caution the member for Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock: I know that, post-Walkerton and listeriosis, your intention, when you said you’ve gone from 10 meat inspectors to 120 or whatever it was, was good, but that’s not what farmers want to hear. That actually is a whole new burden. You put so many butchers and—

Mr. Randy Hillier: Closed up 100 abattoirs.

Mr. Jim Wilson: —abattoirs out of business, and you don’t even seem to apologize for it. There were four abattoirs in my riding. These were great family businesses, not only taking down the livestock and slaughtering it, but then making great cold cuts and the best sausages in the world and all that, all put out of business.

There’s a lot of that in this bill, where Big Brother is going to come in and not even warn you—you have warrantless entry—and go running through your barn. I

hope no government inspector gets shot being mistaken for somebody who has broken into the barn.

Interjections.

Mr. Jim Wilson: Well, some of these barns have several million dollars worth of equipment in them, if you’re a dairy barn or something. It’s as bad as breaking into your house for some of these farmers.

The member for Oxford is absolutely right. Again, the Ontario Farm Animal Council—I recommend members read their letter of July 20, 2009, from John Maaskant, their chairman. He says very clearly that the proposed legislation oversteps its mandate. Again, they thought they were getting a traceability system. You’re bringing in a whole animal welfare act that duplicates both federal initiatives and OSPCA initiatives.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 6 of the clock, the House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1756.

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Mercredi 28 octobre 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 28 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 28 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Hindu prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ONTARIO LABOUR MOBILITY ACT, 2009 LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009 SUR LA MOBILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'ŒUVRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on September 16, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories / Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à accroître la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre entre l'Ontario et les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Where are the Tories? I don't get it. Oh, there's one. It is really hard to do a lead at 9 o'clock in the morning—it really is. I do welcome the citizens of Ontario to this parliamentary channel. It's Wednesday morning, and it's bright and early, 9 o'clock. It's really hard. I have to tell you I used to sing when I was a young man, and it's really hard to sing in the morning—it really is—because you need time to wake up, to open up the lungs, to talk to a lot of Liberals—to loosen up, right?—talk to Tories and just loosen up until you're able to have the lungs ready to debate and to feel comfortable and eloquent. So it's really hard. That's why I was hoping some bright, young Tory person would stand up and do 20 minutes and give me time to just reflect a little bit.

I've got a problem with this bill, I have to tell you—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Oh, no.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I do. The member from Oakville and I had such a tight relationship when we were dealing with Bill 183, which is the college of trades. It seems to me that what we tried to do in that bill is almost undermined by this bill that we are about to be engaged in—the present bill that I'm talking about is Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario

and other Canadian provinces and territories. I want to try to explain why they seem to be in contradiction with each other, and I'll of course be happy to listen to a number of Liberals after I speak, to see what they have to say by way of their two minutes or 20 minutes or whatever time they commit to it.

The college of trades was intended to do many good things; that is, take what the government has been doing badly around apprenticeships and move it to a college of trades that we hope is going to do a better job of it. As I said yesterday in one of the debates, the Liberals have done a poor job of apprenticeship training. We finally have a college of trades that we hope will not only speak well of the trades and promote them, but also create a “scope of practice for trades” and good regulation for the practice of trades, “develop, establish and maintain qualifications for membership in the college ... issue certificates of qualification and statements of membership to members of the college, and renew, amend, suspend, cancel, revoke or reinstate those certificates ... promote the practice of trades”—as I said—“establish apprenticeship programs and other training programs for trades, including training standards, curriculum standards and examinations ... determine appropriate journey person to apprenticeship ratios for trades,” which is an important debate that I know Conservatives are very keen on, and I'm eager to see what developments can come out of it. I'm a big supporter of having good ratios of journeypersons to apprentices. It's about health and safety of workers and about the health and safety of the work that is done, which protects consumers. So I'm looking forward to that particular piece of work.

They will “address compliance issues in respect of matters within the jurisdiction of the college” and “work with other governments in Canada and the minister with respect to the interprovincial standards program for apprenticeship and with respect to qualifications required for trades.” This is of particular interest to me, because this links to Bill 175, which is before us. I'll repeat that. It says: “To work with other governments in Canada and the minister with respect to the interprovincial standards program for apprenticeship and with respect to qualifications required for trades.”

I'll get back to that in a few moments, but I want to say that what we're doing with this college is establishing rules for the trades, establishing what constitutes a qualification or a certificate in a particular trade. What it usually means is that you've got to go through a rigorous program to be able to be an apprentice in a particular trade, and it usually means you've got to be in that pro-

gram for two, three or four years—in some cases, even five. And what it assures is quality of work at the end of it. Surely this is what all Canadians and all citizens of Ontario want.

I wasn't happy with the former Conservative government in terms of the way they broke up the original act into two parts. They created the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act and created as well the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, two separate acts. The reason they did that—good old Mike Harris. I just read an article by Mike Harris on colleges and universities, and I thought, "Of all people to talk about colleges and universities." He ruined the university system, and he's talking about doing more with less and how great it was that he cut \$400 million because it forced the universities to do a better job of it with less money. I thought, "Gee, the Toronto Star gave him a whole big article." I admit, he's a former Premier and so you've got to give him some space—I understand that—but I couldn't help thinking of good old Mike in the context of these trades and what he tried to do.

0910

Mr. Mike Colle: Re-educate people. Re-education.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Re-education. His own re-education. I guess nobody else talks well of Mike, so presumably he's got to write his own articles. That's okay; I understand that. But he created the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, and what does that mean? It means that you break down the authentic trades that require two, three, four years of apprenticing, break them down into the various skill sets, so that if you have a whole trade that takes two, three or four years and then you create an act, the Apprenticeship and Certification Act, that says anybody can be called a tradesperson even though they only have one component of what a trade is all about—we call them tradespeople. John, you know what I mean because you've been following this. We call them tradespeople. Pretty soon everybody's going to be a tradesman or a tradeswoman in a particular field, even though they only have some qualification in a particular trade. So what the Conservatives have done through my good friend Mike Harris—continued by my good buddies the Liberals, because they kept this act, now folded into Bill 183—what it does is to diminish what a trade is. It worries me. But I have been persuaded into believing that Bill 183, the college of trades, may indeed solve that little problemo I have. I can only be hopeful, member from Oakville, because you're a tradesperson. I can only be hopeful. What can I say? You have to be.

Bill 183 is about creating standards for the trades. I give this little background as a way of stating my concern about Bill 175—and I'll tell you why. I want to say, before getting into the telling you why, that I'm not quite sure why we have Bill 175 before us. I really am not quite sure, because even though this bill represents the first instance of Ontario taking the step of giving statutory expression to an Agreement on Internal Trade—and it seems as if it's a reasonable thing to do—the question I've been asking myself in the last couple of days reading

this act is, why do we need this bill? We know that an agreement on internal trade—

Mr. Mike Colle: I'll be back.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'll see you soon, Mike—had been begun in 1994 by the then Liberal government, federally. It has continued to the present under the Conservative government. We know that Monsieur Harper has different kinds of interest in this whole matter, and I'm trying to find his quote because he speaks about why it is that we need to do this. As soon as I find it, I will read it into the record, and if I can't find it, we'll move on. I can't find it, but I will.

Interjection: Try to get organized, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's a tough job; being a critic of many things is a tough job. I'll find it.

Oh, here he is. You see? It's a question of seconds. With the Speaker's indulgence, I'm able to find it on time. Here's what Monsieur Harper said. The labour mobility provisions of the AIT which Bill 175 seeks to implement reflect a certain ideological Conservative commitment, if not framework, by the Harper government, in our view, to reduce the role of government in regulating the economy. And in its throne speech on November 19, the federal government committed to working with the provinces "to remove barriers to internal trade, investment and labour mobility by 2010." It all sounds reasonable because if there are barriers, you say to yourself, we should be removing them, shouldn't we? It makes sense. The Conservative election platform went further by stating that a Harper government "will work to eliminate barriers that restrict or impair trade, investment or labour mobility between provinces and territories by 2010.... We hope to see further progress, but are prepared to intervene by exercising federal authority if barriers to trade, investment and mobility remain by 2010."

Again, to the general public and to most people, it seems like a reasonable thing to do. He is prepared to intervene; he is prepared to exercise his constitutional authority, should barriers exist between provinces, to remove them. The fact of the matter is, he does have the constitutional authority to do this. So if there are barriers, we think he should remove them.

The fact of the matter is, there are no tariffs between provinces. As far as I know, there are no taxes that are levied on one province by another. So I say to myself, what problems have we had that we need to deal with? We know that only 20% of Canadian workers are employed in a regulated occupation or trade; for example, professional skilled technicians or people who work in the compulsory trades. We're talking about 20% of the people. We know there should be standards in these fields. We don't want somebody who operates heavy equipment to be able to do something in another province if they're not adequately trained. We don't want paramedics to be running around helping people who are seriously ill if they're not adequately trained. We don't want accountants if they're not adequately trained; we don't want doctors or plumbers or electricians if they're not adequately trained. We just don't want that. We're

talking about 20% of the professional and other trade occupations. It's not like it's 80% or 90%, we've got serious trade barriers; we're talking about a small amount of trades and professions that we're dealing with. Where there have been concerns interprovincially, by and large, as far as I have been able to gather, we've been able to solve them.

We know there is a forum of labour market ministers that has been established since 1983 to talk about the various issues that might pop up from time to time from province to province. We know that there is a labour mobility coordinating group that reports on the progress of the implementation of the Agreement on Internal Trade. So where there have been issues, they have been dealt with. The way they have been dealt with, at least in terms of mobility of trades, is with a program called the red seal program, which allows qualified tradespersons to practise their trades in any province or territory without having to write additional examinations. The red seal program is an example of how workers, or at least provinces, across Canada—with the exception of British Columbia, which has not bought in—that the red seal program applies to all trades across Canada.

They did this co-operatively, so they have found a solution from one province to another in dealing with the trades, in a way that every province has satisfactory qualifications to be able to get a job, no matter where you go, because the standards are the same. We know that there have been 26 complaints since 1996 around potential problems of barriers that might exist in one occupation from one province to another, but of the 26, 23 have been withdrawn, two complaints have been upheld and one is ongoing.

0920

The point of the matter is that the majority of complaints around issues of occupational standards barriers—presumed barriers that might exist—have been dealt with across Canada, co-operatively, each working with the other. If the government has a problem, it can deal with it on a national level, but standards around occupations are a provincial responsibility and we have a constitutional right to be able to deal with those standards.

That's where the problem lies. The problem is that different provinces have different standards relating to the different occupations, trades and professions. Some standards may be high in one province and low in another. Some provinces love deregulation—i.e. Alberta, God bless them, and British Columbia, God bless them too—and other provinces have stricter kinds of regulations because we believe we should regulate for the protection of the consumer.

Where the problem lies, in my view, is in the federal government's commitment to international trade obligations. We believe those commitments connect, at least as it relates to these Harper Conservatives—and the previous Liberal government, to be sure—to the policies of deregulation and privatization that those agreements seem to entrench.

The real agenda, for me, in terms of what the federal government is doing by way of changes they are making

to the Agreement on Internal Trade, is to make sure, when they go to whatever international conferences there are with other governments, that they are able to say to them that the free trade rules apply to Canada and by extension they apply to the provinces. In my view, it's a slow erosion of our provincial powers to be able to regulate.

This bill allows any person who is outside of the province of Ontario and governed by whatever regulatory or non-regulatory body, private or otherwise, to come into Ontario and practise their trade. That's what this bill does. And it puts the responsibility on the Ontario government to show and to prove—if that person does not get the job, the onus is on the provincial government to show that it's a problem for this province. It puts an incredible responsibility on every ministry of this government to do the research in other provinces and determine what their standards are. It puts responsibilities on municipal governments to understand what the standards are in other provinces and to do research to see whether or not their standards are so inadequate that they have to make a case to say, "No, they don't qualify." It puts the responsibility on non-governmental bodies, meaning the different professions that exist—child care, social work, the Ontario Medical Association and all the other professions—it puts them in the position of having to do the research and assess the qualifications of those individuals and what standards those folks have gone through in the provinces.

Understand: We do not have a repository of information somewhere that says, "Here are the standards across Canada," and you can just flip a finger and say, "Oh, I see. In Nova Scotia, these are the standards around these trades and the medical profession; and in Alberta, these are the standards they have to deal with; and here are the private sector folks managing these trades or some profession, and this is the public sector that's managing it, and here is where they might have had some historical problems connected with it." There is no national repository. The weight and responsibility for assessing the qualifications of an individual and assessing the various regulatory bodies that govern those individuals is not available to us. So you are on your own, as a provincial government—if a ministry is affected—or a non-governmental body or a municipal government, in terms of doing that work. How could they do that? The money and the time aren't there.

This bill imposes \$5-million penalties if, for whatever reason, someone applies and you do not engage them or you do not comply. It imposes a tremendous penalty—five million bucks—on a non-governmental agency, or indeed a government. I have never seen something like it anywhere, and the Liberal government is quite happy to be able to help out with that. So understand: The onus is on the Ontario government to prove and show that the problem doesn't lie with another province whose standards are bad; it is left to you, the Ontario government, to prove that their standards are inadequate and that they shouldn't be hiring somebody. It's just the wrong way of doing things.

I'm quite frankly puzzled as to why the provincial government is doing this. I understand that, from a Canadian perspective, the whole notion of being able to say, "A Canadian is a Canadian, and a Canadian should be able to work wherever they want." I understand how facile that argument is and how easy it is to sell. The problem is that there are different standards, and standards are regulated by provinces. What we're doing is literally giving up on standards no matter where they are. What it means is that we are going to have to downgrade our standards. It's about going to a lower common denominator in terms of standards.

Is this the intent of the Liberal government? I don't know. My suspicion is the following: They're quite happy to comply with the federal government's rules around this issue; they don't see any difficulty. The majority of MPPs have not read this bill; the majority of them have not reflected on the possible consequences of this bill; and the majority of MPPs to my left and in front of me simply enjoy and assume that whatever they're doing is good for Canadians no matter where they are, and that's okay by them. The fact is, when you read this bill, you realize that there are problems. You realize that there are problems.

Section 9 obliges regulatory authorities to recognize and give effect to authorizing certificates issued in any other Canadian jurisdiction. This is the most important part of this bill, and it says:

"When applicant is certified by out-of-province regulatory authority

"9.(1) This section applies if an individual applying to an Ontario regulatory authority for certification in a regulated occupation is already certified in the same occupation by an out-of-province regulatory authority.

"Material additional training"

Additional training does not have to be required. It's not required. Additional training is not required:

"(2) The Ontario regulatory authority shall not require, as a condition of certifying the individual in the regulated occupation, that the individual have, undertake, obtain or undergo any material additional training, experience, examinations or assessments."

0930

There are some exceptions. They must respect the validity of the authorizations accorded by the regulatory officials in any other jurisdiction even when the occupational standards they apply are lower than those in Ontario.

"(12) Every Ontario regulatory authority shall, to the extent possible and where practical,...

"(b) take steps to reconcile differences between the occupational standards it has established for an occupation and occupational standards in effect with respect to the same occupation in the other provinces and territories of Canada that are parties to the Agreement on Internal Trade."

The question I put to my friend from Oakville: If we are about to create strong standards in the college of trades, and then we say, when someone comes from an-

other province and has been trained in another province, that they can come here and get a job without having to go through additional training, and we in Ontario must take steps to reconcile differences—meaning make it so, make it happen; if there are differences in standards, it doesn't matter, you are forced to reconcile those differences, simply make it happen—you as a government will make it happen. We just passed the college of trades that will have strong standards in Ontario as it relates to all of the trades that anybody can think of. But this bill says, "Not a problemo. If you come from another province and the standards are lower, it's okay; you've got to reconcile those differences." That is the obligation that this bill puts on this government, on municipal authorities and on non-governmental bodies. I've never seen anything like it; I have to tell you that. So even though there are various exceptions and even though a tribunal of sorts will be set up to deal with some of these differences, we believe, based on past practices, that this bill, in the form in which it is written, will take precedence, will succeed in doing what the intent of this bill is all about. This bill overrides any other bill that we have before this place, or any bill that has been passed by this government now or in the past. This bill will override anything else.

Pat Dillon, business manager for the Building and Construction Trades Council of Ontario, has raised concerns that the new labour mobility regimes may undermine the red seal program which is working to facilitate labour mobility. In part, the problem arises from the fact, as I mentioned earlier, that British Columbia doesn't buy into the red seal program. According to Mr. Dillon, "There is no doubt in my mind that with what they have put in place, it allows for the lowering of standards, no matter how it is cut." That's Pat Dillon, who has supported this government over the many years and has concerns about the bill that you have put before us.

Indeed, the Ontario Federation of Labour has serious concerns about what you are doing with this bill. I think they will all stand shoulder to shoulder in opposing it, as I am expressing.

I know that the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada has concerns about this. They argue there will be little incentive for physicians to begin practising in areas of need because they will be able to move upon registration in any jurisdiction they want. So they are concerned about standards.

I believe in standards. The idea of standards is not to turn people away. The idea of standards is to make sure that those who have substandard levels acquire the knowledge and the experience they need to be able to do it well. I'm not talking about having to take years, necessarily, to come up to par; I'm talking about doing the adequate training, whatever it might take. The idea is not to shut people out; the idea is to provide the adequate training that is required to be able to achieve the standard that we believe in, that gives us the security and the protection that we, as consumers, need. I think that is what this is about.

This bill is going to put in place monitors. Imagine that. They're going to hire monitors—I believe loads of

them—to make sure that the rules of this bill, the rules of the game, are complied with. Imagine: We're putting into place rules that we believe are going to erode standards in Ontario, and we're going to be hiring monitors whose role it is to make sure that provincial ministries, non-governmental bodies and municipal governments comply with the bill. How wonderful of this government to facilitate that particular role.

We don't know why you're doing this, we really don't. We don't believe that there is a problem here that needs to be fixed. We believe that you're looking for a solution that is already there. We believe that you are working very closely with the federal government in bringing down standards—which you will say is about bringing down barriers, but as far as I can tell, there are very few barriers that we have not solved. Based on what I've told you, of the 26 cases that have been in dispute, 23 have been withdrawn.

We are looking forward to debate, we are looking forward to hearings—I know you want them too—because we will be able to have details of this bill under scrutiny by those who come to speak about it. We will have more time to be able to see what this bill is all about—and what it's about, in my view, is deregulation and privatization of various programs that we provide in Ontario. We believe this is bad overall for Canadians and this is bad for Ontarians, and we look forward to that debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate this morning on the labour mobility code. All members here will know that if this bill is passed, the provisions in any other act, any other regulation, any other bylaw that's in existence and that are in conflict with the labour code, as it becomes proposed law, the act is going to override those provisions.

The act is going to apply to applications for certification made on or after the day the act comes into force or to any other application where a final decision has not been made yet. To ensure transparency in this case, the act is going to require that regulators publish on their websites all certification requirements that workers, already certified anywhere else in Canada, must meet in order to work right here in our province.

I think people understand the need for this now, in this day and age. People are moving around the country. They want the right to move around the country. Sometimes the work moves around the country; sometimes the people just choose to move themselves. To have an old-fashioned system where people must recertify themselves every time they cross a provincial boundary I don't think is anything we want to see in place anymore.

Mr. Marchese, the member for Trinity–Spadina, has pointed out some concerns he has with the bill. That's the object of the hearing process, to hear those concerns, to hear from the stakeholders, to have a fulsome discussion as to what changes should be made during that period when the bill is open to the public.

Since last summer, we've been working with provincial regulators and with industry stakeholders to discuss

the changes that are proposed under the amended AIT, and we're going to try to help everybody to meet their new obligations. But I think in today's economy, the average Ontarian understands that this is a necessary move. It's a progressive move. If the member from Trinity–Spadina has suggestions as to how this could be made better, we're open to that.

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The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for Trinity–Spadina always gets very enthusiastic and, to some extent, entertaining, and I understand his perspective of protectionism in some areas. I think what we need are the highest possible standards in the world. It's not wrong to presume that one province that's doing something in less time or even more efficiently—as long as it meets the highest safety and quality standards possible, then I suspect we should move forward and not assume the Luddite position.

However, I want to put on the record something very important to an industry that's somewhat related to this idea of labour mobility. It's the AIT, the Agreement on Internal Trade provincially. I have a letter here that was written to the Premier, and this letter is signed by the Egg Farmers of Ontario, the Turkey Producers' Marketing Board, the Ontario Broiler Hatching Egg and Chick Commission, the chair of the Dairy Farmers of Ontario and the chair of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. This was sent as well to the Minister of Agriculture, and it's on agriculture.

It says, "The five supply-managed commodities in Ontario have been a port in the storm during the economic turmoil that has crippled many industries in Ontario, including other agriculture commodities." We know how difficult agriculture is today. "Chicken, eggs, turkey and dairy are renewable resources, producing 'local' food that provides Ontario consumers with the highest-quality and safest food, period."

This is another case where trade itself—not just the idea that Mr. Marchese is pointing out; standards—is in some jeopardy. This is why they've pointed this out: "Premier, the five supply-managed boards in Ontario have greatly appreciated your ... support," and they want you to continue that support. Don't sign on to this agreement.

It's much like this decision between Quebec and Ontario. For years, labour mobility was only one way. This bill I don't think is going to solve the problems, and you may question its ability—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Trinity–Spadina raised a number of controversial and informative aspects of this bill.

I just want to mention one thing that drives a lot of ordinary Ontarians crazy. Take a doctor, for instance: If a doctor is practising in Alberta, and that doctor wants to come to Ontario to practise, in many cases that doctor

would be required to go back to school in order to practise in Ontario. This is not a doctor from Bangladesh or a doctor from Zimbabwe; this is a doctor from Newfoundland or Prince Edward Island who has been practising for five, 10, 20, 30 or 40 years. Because of all the empires that each province has built up, it's impossible for not only doctors but a lot of highly skilled professionals to ply their trade in different provinces.

Do you know what that does? Many doctors who might want to come to Ontario or want to go to another province will go to the United States. It's easier for them to practise in the States; they get certified immediately if they go to the States.

There are bigger barriers. It's like our trade barriers between provinces. You try to get a bottle of beer from another province; you can't do it. Wine from other provinces, never mind people—there are so many archaic, nonsensical barriers between provincial governments that in essence treat Canadians like foreign citizens within their own country. This is a small attempt to try and remove some of these archaic barriers to mobility.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member from Trinity–Spadina, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I appreciate the fact that we're going to have hearings. I appreciate the fact that the member from Oakville said that they would consult the stakeholders. I don't know who they are, but they consulted someone. In the hearings, we hope to be able to deal with some oversights, as we did with the college of trades, where we had a French representative from Collège Boréal who talked about making sure that we include the interests of our French-speaking community in Ontario. That's an oversight that I hope we can correct as we move on with bills. We should have reflected that in the bill. I just wanted to mention that as we go on with these things, we have to remember we have a strong French-speaking community in this province and their needs need to be reflected in law.

I know that the members from Oakville, Eglinton–Lawrence and Durham talked about the idea of being old-fashioned and archaic and that we need to modernize. It's presented in nice language that makes me, as a critic, look as if I am, as the member from Durham said—what did he say?

Mr. John O'Toole: A Luddite.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: A Luddite, yes. Both parties have talked about that.

The member from Durham said two contradictory things. He said the New Democrats are being protectionist, and at the same time he said he wants high standards. Sorry, they don't go together. This bill is not about the highest standard; it's about the lowest standard. That's what this bill is about: It's about standards. If you are saying to me that across Canada we have the same standards, either I am wrong or you are all wrong. What we do need are standards we can all agree on, and this bill does not give us the kinds of standards, the high standards, we're looking for.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm delighted to stand up in my place and enter the debate on a very important issue, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009. I listened to the parliamentary assistant speak a couple of days ago. I also listened to the member from the third party speak to this issue.

I think it's a very important issue, especially because in Ontario we are prospering in terms of building our infrastructure and our economy. We want more skilled workers to come and enter the professions.

As you know, in this province we try as much as possible to eliminate the barriers facing many different people who want to come to and live and work in this province. As you know, over the years every province has built some kind of criteria and jurisdictions. That's what prohibits many people from coming to this province and entering the workforce. I think it creates obstacles for many who want to come and work here, especially if they have certain qualifications.

Now qualifications have become very similar, and many people are going through the same kinds of colleges and facilities and getting the same education. Why don't we eliminate those barriers and allow them to come and help us build this beautiful province?

This act, if passed, will support full labour mobility and allow more professionals and skilled workers from across Canada to come and work in Ontario.

We're talking about the Asian societies, Asian communities. Many different jurisdictions in Ontario are facing challenges in terms of demographic establishment, demographic capacity, with people moving out or getting older, and people not able to work anymore. In our capacity in this province, we allow people to come and enjoy our privileges in this province. We learn from their skills, capacities and intellectual abilities.

I think it's important to create one nation. As you know, many different jurisdictions around the globe are trying to break the barriers between nations. Look at what happened with the European Union: They tried to work together, from nation to nation. Even though they have different cultural structures, languages, beliefs, philosophies, ideologies and political systems, they created the union to allow the people who live in that jurisdiction, that part of the globe, to work together, move smoothly from nation to nation and work in every country without any problem. They unified the structure, criteria and labour mobility between their countries because they think it's important for them.

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In order to have a prosperous future and be able to tackle high-tech and technology and build their nations, they have to work together. They have to be specialized; they have to be specific in different jobs and different work. That is why they created the union: to break the barriers and allow people to cross from nation to nation and work without any problems, without any certification, without any issues. That's why people are talking

about NAFTA, free trade and many different issues around the globe. Many different jurisdictions and areas around the globe are trying to work together in order to remove the obstacles facing people travelling from one jurisdiction to another. That's why here in Canada, and especially in Ontario, we want to try to eliminate those barriers facing many different people, who are graduates from Saskatchewan or British Columbia or Quebec, to come work in Ontario.

I want to tell you something very important: We have sometimes faced in this province a lot of difficulties to recruit doctors, because if you are a doctor who graduated from Quebec, for a certain time, because of certain difficulties, you cannot practise in Ontario; you have to be qualified according to the system we have in Ontario in order to be able to practise here. Or if you're an electrician from a different province, you cannot use your certificate in Ontario.

It creates difficulty for some people who want to come to Ontario, and they are not able to use their talents and skills. I know we are moving forward on this front, especially in the Ministry of Health. Not a long time ago, my colleague, now the Minister of Children and Youth Services, led a bill and worked on a big, important issue—the doctor issue—which would create in this place, in this government, in Ontario some kind of accessibility for people who are graduates from jurisdictions similar to our system in Ontario, places like England or the United States, where they have the same qualifications and same educational standards, to be able to come and practice in the province of Ontario.

So this step should be taken and it should be addressed because so many people have the ability and the skills, and have been educated very well. They can come and help us to maintain our prosperity in this province of Ontario, especially people who live in other provinces, who have the same or similar cultural understanding and language, and many of the same criteria. Why don't we eliminate those barriers? Why wouldn't we allow people to come and work and share their experience?

If this bill passes, it means every person who is certified in a different jurisdiction can come to this province of Ontario and work. I think it's the right thing to do to go forward toward a brighter future. If we don't eliminate those barriers between the provinces and Ontario, how can we eliminate the differences between us and neighbouring countries? I think it's a very important step to create flexibility and some kind of mobility between the people who live in this province. I know some people don't agree with that; they like to surround Ontario with some kind of fence and not allow people to come, and create difficult barriers to protect, according to them, the workforce in this province of Ontario. It's not about protection, it's about enhancing our ability and how we can mix people together and how we can create some kind of system able to absorb all the skills and abilities that already exist in this nation.

I know we are all of us subject to the same immigration system and, as you know, many people from

different parts of the globe want to immigrate to Canada. Most of the time, they come with a lot of skills, education and abilities, and they want to come and work in the province of Ontario. They sometimes come to Ontario and cannot utilize their potential, so they move to different jurisdictions. We found that in those different jurisdictions they give them more access to the professions and trades than this province has in the past. That's why we came as a government and established a professionals and trade secretariat. We have a commissioner right now, Dr. Jean Augustine, to oversee the conduct of those trades and professionals who exist in the province of Ontario.

This bill, if passed, will give all the people who want to live in Ontario, who want to come from different provinces, an equal chance to apply for jobs. Especially in this province, we like to be united on many different fronts. We have the same policies, we have the same ability and the same future. If this bill passes, it will allow people from many different jurisdictions to come and be able to work in the province. For businesses, it will help to address the critical skills shortage and improve their competitiveness by allowing employers to recruit from larger talent pools.

I know some members of this House don't like the idea. They think it will infringe and break the monopoly of certain groups who like to be in control, who like to be the only people that exist in the province of Ontario. I think that's not good for the unity of the nation, it's not good for the future of this province. I think it's important to create some kind of greater pool so that the people of the province can draw from the talent and skill that already exists in this nation.

I think we are moving in the right direction, we're taking the right steps, and I want to congratulate the minister for coming up with this initiative, because I believe it's a great initiative to allow people to come into Ontario.

Many different times, especially in the jurisdictions close to Ontario, like Quebec—we had, in the past, so many different issues with people from Quebec who wanted to come to Ontario or Ontarians going to work in Quebec. Different jurisdictions wouldn't allow or recognize their certifications, and that's why we opened the door wide for the underground economy. If this bill passes, I guess we'll eliminate those issues, and everyone with certification will be able to open a business and work openly in the province of Ontario without forcing those people to work underground or work illegally.

We've tackled many different issues in the past in this province. As you know, many people, when they came and they had a certificate from a difference province, were being blocked from using that certificate, so we forced those people to work under the table or go into the underground economy. So this will give the ability to people to work openly and utilize their certificate. I think it's a very important step toward opening up the province of Ontario for many different talented people who want to come to this beautiful province. Also, Ontario will benefit from opening up a large talent pool for many dif-

ferent companies that want to prosper, that want to expand their operations in this province.

I think it's an important step toward a brighter future, toward eliminating those barriers not just in the province of Ontario and within different cities and different jurisdictions, but also between many different provinces that want to work toward a brighter nation and a better future.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker, for allowing me to stand up and speak on this important issue. Hopefully many members of this House will stand up in their places and support this bill, because these are the things—I think it's the right way, the right bill, and is an important step toward breaking the barriers that we face in the future, in which all of us are looking forward to maintaining our ability to attract more skilled people to come work with us in the province and also to deal with the challenges we are facing not to depend totally on people who come from outside the nation, but to utilize the capacity and the potential and the skills which already exist in this nation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I want to thank the member from London—Fanshawe for making his remarks. In fact, his riding is where my husband and I first lived when we were married 43 years ago, so I know the area very well.

I guess we are the first province to jump into this pool. We have introduced this legislation which essentially opens our borders to workers from other provinces to come into Ontario before all of the other provinces have opened their borders in order to allow Ontarians to work in other parts of Canada. I guess being first sometimes wins the race, and sometimes it's good to be second, third or fourth to understand where the wrinkles are and be able to modify whatever is happening so that we do the best we can for Ontarians.

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I know that this doesn't affect the province of Quebec because negotiations are still underway with that province in order for this kind of legislation to take effect there. However, the main concern that is being raised by stakeholders is about the level of qualification, the standards that are being applied across the country. What an out-of-province applicant may have in the way of qualifications may not measure up to what Ontarians have and what we require here.

The College of Audiologists and Speech-Language Pathologists has already expressed a concern. Their concern is that without examining the academic qualifications or being able to ask for any retesting, they can't measure whether or not the standards meet those standards here in Ontario.

I think we need to look at that in committee and listen to our stakeholders when they come before us.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I do have a small amount of knowledge on this, considering I was in the trades for over 30 years. I fail to see the relationship that the member from London—Fanshawe says between immigration and trades

and crafts. What it is about is quality workmanship and craftsmanship. It's about safety standards. It's about uniformity. If this country wants to attract tradespeople from other countries, then they should make uniform standards throughout the country. In other words, are there some trades that are red-flagged? In my trade, ironworking and welding, you have to have qualifications throughout the country. Certain standards have to be met. If you want to have everybody on the same page, then you're going to have all the trades qualified throughout the country. It doesn't matter if you're a drywaller—all these people are involved in construction. They're involved in things that people have to walk under and walk on, and also, they have to last. What you need is uniform quality tradespeople throughout the country, a standard for the whole country, not a different one in Saskatchewan, not a different one in British Columbia.

Yes, you're going to have problems if people come from other provinces if they're not qualified. I, for one, wouldn't want to walk on a bridge in Ontario if I knew some guys from BC had about half their tickets, who welded it up. I personally would not want to drive over that bridge. I'd want to know that these guys can go anywhere in the world and work—internationally—and that's the way it should be.

What they aren't talking about are the problems that will be created by people coming in who are not qualified. They're going to be arguing with the people who are qualified in the local unions and locals of that city. They haven't even discussed the problems that are going to be there.

They've got a long way to go on this bill, and it certainly doesn't cut it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments? The member for—

Mr. Mike Colle: Eglinton—Lawrence.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Oakville stood at the same time. The member for Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: I'm sure we'll both end up speaking.

I do want to correct the member from Burlington. We're actually the third jurisdiction that is entering this process. The province of Manitoba has already passed legislation that would allow this to happen, and the province of British Columbia is in the process of doing that.

In my remarks, based on the comments of the member from London—Fanshawe, I did want to talk about the importance of the red seal program. Make no mistake about it: This government supports the red seal program. We think it's a model for labour mobility and it's a model for those common interprovincial standards that we all want to see in the trades throughout the country, especially in the skilled trades and professions. This commitment to the red seal program is explicit in the proposed bill before you. We've gone out of our way to make sure that the red seal program is elevated to the level that it should be because we think that endorsement provides tradespersons a competitive hiring advantage,

it's respected by industry and it's also respected by employers and by the employees themselves. We want the red seal program that's in existence today to remain strong—it's a vehicle for labour mobility—but we also want it to remain as the Canadian standard of excellence for training and certification in the skilled trades.

Why we're doing this is because we want to strengthen the economy during a challenging time by removing the barriers that don't currently allow for the free passage of people who want to work anywhere in this country. At the same time, we're implementing the highest standards possible to ensure that if somebody is certified in another province and that certification is going to be accepted within our province, we're assured that that standard is of the highest quality it possibly can be.

So if it's passed, we're going to support full labour mobility. We're simply going to make it easier for Canadians to work to the highest standards anywhere in this country.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member for London–Fanshawe makes a very good point. I suspect even the parliamentary assistant, who just spoke—I would probably agree with what they're saying.

Just a specific case: I have an optician in my riding who has been with the college. He's very highly regarded in the profession. I believe his name is Ali Khan. He was saying that in some jurisdictions in Canada they have a very shortened program for opticians, whereas in Ontario it is a much longer program. The suggestion here is, for the economic value of this, that they could hire someone in Ontario who has maybe trained for four months in BC to work for less money at Costco or LensCrafters or some other larger type of business that's interested in the payroll issues. What is really important here is both the economics and the standards. What fundamentally is the most important is the safety and the standards for the people of Ontario.

I want to objectively say that often, because you have gone to school for a long time for a specific thing, it does not mean you're better trained than someone coming from another jurisdiction in Canada. I think the passing of qualifying tests or some kind of standards might be more the issue, and I think the safety of the consumer is critical here, especially in medical issues, but more importantly in any issue that could affect our common safety.

At the same time, we must be flexible, but the standards can't be lowered. Some people may want to take a degree in four years, and some may want to do it on a fast track—two years—but take the same number of lecture hours. So let's make sure we don't lower the standards in the interest of having the best possible economic value of the skilled trades or professions in Ontario. We need to be competitive in a global economy.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member from London–Fanshawe has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I want to thank the member from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, the member from Burlington, the member from Oakville and the member from Durham for speaking and commenting on my speech.

As I mentioned at the beginning, we are asking people to come to Canada from different parts of the globe. We accept engineers, professors, doctors and nurses and we invite them to come and help us build this province, and at the same time we create barriers between Ontario and Quebec, British Columbia, Manitoba and Newfoundland. So I think we are looking for skilled people to come with certain standards, and I know we in this province respect the criteria, the standards. We want all the people who have high skills to come and work with us in Ontario.

With respect to the standards and safety that every member spoke about, I think safety and standards are important to us. I think when the bill goes to committee they're going to create some kind of criteria to make sure that all the people from different jurisdictions have the same standards we have in Ontario.

When we talk about different jurisdictions, the member from Oakville, the PA for the minister, mentioned that we in Ontario are the third jurisdiction to do this. I think it's important for all of us in this province to recognize other qualifications from different provinces, as we live in the same nation, and that we've started to create barriers among us. I mentioned how Europe tried to eliminate the barriers between nations, despite cultures, languages, religions, ideologies and philosophies. We're trying in North America to create NAFTA, or some kind of agreement between us, the United States and Mexico, and also eliminate all these barriers. In the meantime, we have barriers within the nation that I think are difficult, and that's a shame.

So I thank and applaud the minister for coming up with a proposal to eliminate those barriers within our nation and allow people with high skills to come and enjoy our prosperity and help us build this beautiful province. Again, I'm looking forward to everyone in the House supporting this bill, because it's good for the future of this province.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): This House will recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1009 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to introduce some guests in the gallery today on behalf of myself and my colleague from Beaches–East York, Michael Prue.

Today on the front lawn of Parliament, there will be a rally against the HST. The rally coordinator and host, Jim Garchinski, is here today and in the audience. He is accompanied by Terry Sullivan, Paul Bailey, Bill Harford, Richard Metcalfe and Don MacLeod. Today they will be joined on the front lawn of the Legislature by Kevin Gaudet, Pauline Aunger, Peter Coleman, Linda Piniz-

zotto, Bill McLean, Russ Rak, John Campbell and Vic Dybenko, as well as the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, who just walked in, and the leader of the third party, Andrea Horwath. We're looking forward to seeing all Ontarians on the front lawn of the Legislature today.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would like to introduce some guests from the town of Ponoka, Alberta: Robyn McKelvie, Nicole Hoffman and Nathan Hoffman, in the public gallery.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I would like to introduce a couple of guests and friends from Collingwood who are seated in the members' east gallery: Bev and Peter Baxter from Collingwood.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: We will shortly be joined by the principal and students from As-Sadiq Islamic School in York region. It is the Toronto area's largest Islamic school.

Hon. John Milloy: I'd like to welcome to the Legislature today the family of page Emma Johnson. We have Angela, William and Andrew Johnson from the great riding of Kitchener Centre with us here today.

Mr. Bob Delaney: In the members' east gallery, I'd like to introduce a personal friend and a very talented web developer, Paul McKenzie.

Mr. Mario Sergio: In the House, I'm proud to have page Rushabh Shah, and I hope that he will enjoy his time here at Queen's Park and that the time will serve him well. I'd like to welcome him here as he serves all the members of the House.

Hon. Margaret R. Best: I would like to welcome William Birch, from the riding of Scarborough—Guildwood, to the House today.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have the pleasure to introduce to the members a seven-person delegation from the People's Republic of China. They're here from the Ministry of Labour and the delegation is being led by Mr. Bing Han, who is the deputy minister. Let's welcome them warmly.

Hon. John Gerretsen: I would like to introduce a group of students from Queen's University who will be in the gallery shortly. Annually, Christina Blizzard, one of our esteemed columnists who cover us here at Queen's Park, arranges for students to be here for a day so that they can see the democratic process in action. I'd like to welcome them.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: I'm delighted today to welcome members from the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who are here. They will be meeting with members of the Legislative Assembly. They are also very generously hosting a reception later on today, and all members of the assembly are welcome. We're delighted that they're here.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I'd just like to welcome all of the other people who are here today, because it took a little bit of time to get our leader in his seat. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Richmond Hill—Richmond Hill—and page Shaan Ali Jessa—

Interjections: Withdraw! Withdraw!

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Speaker withdraws his unparliamentary comment.

On behalf of the member from Richmond Hill and page Shaan Ali Jessa, we would like to welcome Fatima Jessa, Dilshad Jessa and Hussein Jessa to the members' west gallery. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Seated in the Speaker's gallery, from my riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, I would like to welcome Ray Galloway, Jeannie Sisco and Glenna Gerry. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Yesterday, in response to my questions, the Premier indicated that the McKinsey report is online and can be found online. All the Googling in the world will not find you the McKinsey report online, so I'm wondering whether the Premier is prepared to correct the record or withdraw that comment.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): That's not a point of order, but I trust the Premier will address your issue.

STANDING ORDERS

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: On the point of order raised yesterday, for the clarification of the Speaker and the table: My point of order related to a significant public funding announcement made by the government yesterday outside of this chamber, which has become a rather frequent practice of this government. I cited a number of standing orders, and, at the very least, I believe the continued practice by this government violates the spirit, if nothing less, of those standing orders.

EMERGENCY EVACUATION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Yesterday we had an evacuation drill here at the assembly. Drills such as these are intended to test the processes in place to evacuate the building in case of fire or other emergency. They give us an opportunity to evaluate the processes and at the same time allow for the occupants of the building to understand the proper procedures for exiting the building.

I am pleased to report that yesterday's drill was successful and that the building was evacuated in under 12 minutes. To those members who co-operated, I thank you. To those who did not, I know that we will be able to count on your co-operation the next time we engage in this important exercise.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PROVINCIAL DEFICIT

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question for the Premier: Yesterday, the Premier still refused to say when he would bring forward a plan to deal with his massive record-busting deficit that is going to break the backs of Ontario taxpayers. Every day the Premier retreats into his thinking

place, Ontario families are on the hook for an additional \$2.8 million each and every hour of the day in increased debt.

So let me ask the Premier a different way: Will the Premier table a plan before he takes off on his Christmas vacation?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We're always, of course—

Interjection: Where are you going for Christmas?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm just staying home.

I'm always open to suggestions from the honourable member as to any specific approach that he might bring. What I am aware of is that the member would eliminate the Ontario health premium. That would add another \$3 billion to the deficit. I don't think that would be a prudent approach.

We are going to take a little bit of time. Notwithstanding the member's haste and imprudence, we're going to take a bit of time. We're going to work both internally inside of government and externally and engage Ontarians. We have made it clear that we have three priorities: health care, education and strengthening our economy. If my honourable colleague has any specific suggestions, we would welcome those.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Yesterday, when pressed by the media for a plan, the Premier said, "The other shoe will drop, I guess, eventually." While he stands around staring at his loafers, Ontario families are on the hook for an additional \$13,500 in Dalton McGuinty debt.

I sense that we know what Premier McGuinty's real plan is. Pensioners at Queen's Park today know it too. They know that your greedy sales tax grab is going to be used to fuel more runaway spending and sweetheart deals for Liberal friends.

When will the Premier table a plan to end his sweetheart deals and give Ontario families a tax break, not another tax hike?

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Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We know that my colleague's approach is to cut more taxes. How he's going to pay for that, I'm not sure, but at least that is clear. We put in place a plan that is clear—and I think there's a broad level of support for it—of the things that we need to do at this point in time. We continue to invest in infrastructure; that creates jobs in the short term, and it enhances our economic productivity in the long term.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: He's against that, too.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My colleague is against that. We provided significant support to the auto sector to put it on a sound footing. We think that's the appropriate thing to do; my honourable colleague is against that. We're investing heavily in retraining opportunities for families that have been, through no fault of their own, dislocated because of the economic recession. We're helping them; my colleague is against that. That is part of our plan. We continue to pursue that part of our plan and, in due course, we'll also be talking about the best ways to address our deficit.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Premier, retired police officers, retired firefighters, municipal workers and others are gathering on the lawn at Queen's Park today to protest your greedy Dalton sales tax grab. On CFRB this morning, Sandy from Mississauga said she can't afford her car payments as it is. She knows things will get worse when your massive sales tax hits home. It'll cost her more to put gas in her car. It'll cost her more for heat for her home. Even her Tim Hortons double-double in the morning is going to get whacked by Dalton McGuinty. We always suspected this was a \$3-billion greedy tax grab. Now we know for sure.

I ask the Premier: Why does your deficit plan include only more taxes on the backs of retirees and Ontario families?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am appreciative of the opportunity so I can clear a few things up. Number one, my colleague knows that, in fact, the harmonized sales tax will cost the Ontario treasury dollars. He knows that. Secondly, he also knows, but he's not prepared to acknowledge this, that accompanying the harmonized sales tax is a reduction in personal income tax.

One of the things that I have learned through my opportunities to chat with retirees and grandparents is that together they are asking a very important question of all of us: What do we need to do to ensure that we can strengthen this economy so that it generates more jobs not just for ourselves and our children but for our grandchildren? I know the harmonized sales tax is not an easy thing to do. It is not designed to enhance our popularity and have people acclaim us province-wide. It's designed to do what we need to do, which is to strengthen this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Premier: Premier, have you called in the police to investigate the bid-rigging and price-fixing that took place in your billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: We've had a number of opportunities to speak to this together, on this particular issue, and my honourable colleague continues to expand, enhance, enlarge and exaggerate. Fortunately, we have the voice—the calm voice—of an independent officer of the Legislature, the Provincial Auditor, who looked at these very specific issues. He made some very specific findings. I would encourage my friend to accept those findings and understand that the matter has been thoroughly reviewed. I accept that, and I would urge him to do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: I guess I will take that as a no, that this Premier has no intention of calling in the police or getting to the bottom of his billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. But we saw a different Premier a few years ago. On November 3, 2005, when talking about Paul Martin

calling in the RCMP to investigate Justice Gomery's findings in the sponsorship scandal, the Premier said, "Prime Minister Martin has moved very quickly and very aggressively on it." Yet in his own scandal, involving 10 times the money and Liberal-friendly health IT consultants getting rich, we see a very different Premier entirely.

I ask the Premier again: Why hasn't he called in the police to investigate this scandal where we saw Liberal-friendly consultants get fat and rich and Ontario families get nothing in return?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I'm not sure there was any basis in fact to be found in the assertions which form part of my honourable colleague's question. He is nothing if not fanciful, and I congratulate him in that particular respect.

I want to remind all of us of what the auditor said. He made a few findings. One of those was, he said, "We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity here." My friend constantly refers to insiders somehow gaining advantage here. The auditor also said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts ... but we saw no evidence of this during our work."

I would strongly encourage my friend to review the auditor's report once again and to accept wholeheartedly and without—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back then, the Premier said Paul Martin acted very quickly. I guess in comparison, even Mr. Dithers looks decisive next to Dalton McGuinty.

Two years deep in second-term rot, the Premier still refuses to call a public inquiry. This afternoon, this House will debate an Ontario PC motion to call a full public inquiry. Ontario families want to know who tried to block the Auditor General from his investigation, Ontario families want to know who benefited from the price-rigging and the bid-fixing, and Ontario families want to know why you're going to hit them with a massive new sales tax hike instead of trying to get some of their money back from the Liberal-friendly consultants.

Premier, will you finally do the right thing, stand in your place and support a full public inquiry?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: One of the responsibilities that we all have in this House is to interpret and give expression to the public interest. I think what the public interest demands here is that we accept the auditor's report in full. I think it demands that we work together to move forward and continue to make more progress when it comes to putting in place an electronic health record that will benefit all Ontarians.

The fact of the matter is—again, my colleague is not prepared to acknowledge this—we have built a strong foundation. We have in place an important part of the foundation on which to build this electronic health record: 80,000 Ontarians are now in a pilot project for ePrescribing and four million Ontarians have electronic medical records. All Ontario hospitals have gone filmless; they're now using digital diagnostic scans.

These are the kinds of things that we have established as a success. There's more to be done, and I think that's what Ontarians want us to do.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the Premier told Ontario families they "can't have everything" and that he wants a discussion on fiscal restraint. Does he believe Ontario can afford to move ahead with massive corporate tax giveaways, or is that not up for discussion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think we had the opportunity to speak about this here just yesterday; my answer is the same.

What my colleague is talking about is the budget. In that budget, we did a number of things. In addition to ensuring that our corporations were competitive in a globalized economy, we moved to reduce personal income taxes. We also accelerated the Ontario child benefit to help needy families meet expenses for their children. We also invested significantly in new retraining opportunities for people who have lost their jobs because of the global recession.

By the way, it's a budget that has been endorsed by poverty groups and food banks in Ontario in addition to business groups. We think it has struck the right balance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontario families are waiting for the other shoe to drop, and they see it's going to come crashing down on them. The Premier brags about his tax reform, that it's going to cost the treasury billions of dollars. It will also cost Ontario consumers billions of dollars in higher taxes on gasoline, on hydro and on home heating.

If the Premier is sincere, when will he put his unfair tax scheme up for discussion?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: It's up for discussion every day in this House, in businesses and at the breakfast tables of families. I think it's a very important discussion for us to have. To come back to something I said earlier, I think the single most important question that we are charged with answering together is, what do we need to do in order to strengthen our economy? It's different from the question of what we want to do. What do we need to do to build a stronger economy not just for ourselves but for our children and grandchildren? What do we need to do to ensure that we've got the continuing capacity to support our colleges, our universities, our schools, our hospitals, our doctors, our nurses, our police and our firefighters? The foundation for all of that is a strong economy. We're absolutely convinced we've got to move forward with the HST to maintain that fiscal capacity, that economic capacity to enjoy our quality of life and good-quality public services.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Premier is claiming that he's asking Ontarians for advice, but we all know his

mind is already made up. We're already seeing it. Local hospitals are closing, waits for long-term care are growing, people are being told they have to pay more, but corporate taxes and consulting contracts are not up for discussion. That shoe is not going to drop in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario.

How can this Premier call this a discussion when everyone knows his mind is already made up?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that we can get a little carried away in here sometimes—it's human nature—but there are no hospitals being closed and I would ask my colleague to acknowledge that. We continue to invest more and more, year over year, in health care. In fact, we're building hospitals and expanding existing hospitals.

But there is an important issue to be made here over and over again. I would ask my colleagues on all sides of the House to accept that we have to make some difficult decisions. We find ourselves at a point in time in our history when we're running a significant deficit, for all the right reasons. We're investing heavily in infrastructure, we're investing heavily in retraining programs, and we're helping people who are on social assistance and needy families through the Ontario child benefit. We're doing those things for the right reasons. But we are going to have to, together, now make some difficult decisions about those things where we may not be able to invest as quickly as we had originally anticipated and those things we may have to stop doing in order to put in place a plan to eliminate our deficit.

TAXATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Again to the Premier, and it's a very simple and straightforward question: Exactly how many jobs will this harmonized sales tax create?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I can't say exactly how many it is going to create, but what I can say is that there is a very strong consensus that has been there for a long, long time. It's there in the IMF; it's in the OECD. For example, if you want to become a member state of the European Union, you cannot do so unless you first have in place a harmonized sales tax or a value-added tax. There are 130 countries that are already there. We need to give our businesses, and especially—

Interjections.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I have obviously distracted them, Speaker. I apologize for that.

It's the single most important thing for us to do, and that's why we're going to move ahead.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm surprised the Premier didn't just tell me it was on a website and I could look it up online, like he did yesterday with the phantom McKinsey report. But I'm not surprised that the Premier doesn't have a number, because none exists. The consensus of the experts is that the HST is actually a job killer. A report by the C.D. Howe Institute says the HST will drive up the unemployment rate in this province.

Can the Premier cite a single study that shows the HST will increase employment levels in this province?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that with respect to the Ontario Chamber of Commerce, my friend has been gently chided and corrected when it comes to her misinterpretation of the report that they put out, and I think the C.D. Howe may be interested in doing the same kind of thing.

The reason that 130 other countries and four other provinces have moved ahead with a harmonized sales tax, the reason that no subsequent government has ever undone the introduction of the HST, is because it works. It does give an added benefit to our businesses, but especially our manufacturers, who had been up against it even long before this recession had its impact here in Ontario.

This is all about ensuring that our businesses can compete in a globalized economy. It's about ensuring that our products can be introduced into the global economy at a competitive price level. When we're more competitive here, then we can expand our businesses, we can retain existing employees and we can hire still more Ontarians. Fundamentally, that's what this is all about: ensuring we have a strong economy that can continue to hire more and more Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The Ontario Chamber of Commerce, in fact, reiterated my comments that this is a tax that's not going to create jobs, that it's going to reduce the rate of job creation in this province.

Ontario has already lost 200,000 jobs this year, and people are struggling right now in this economy. What Ontarians are trying to figure out is why, in the middle of a devastating recession, the Premier signed a secret deal with Stephen Harper that makes life less affordable for people and that experts say will kill up to 40,000 jobs a year? Can he tell them that?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: There's no doubt that we could not have done this without the support and co-operation of the federal government. I think there's no doubt as well that if this were an easy thing to do, other provincial governments would have done it.

We have come to a point in our history, I would argue, where we cannot escape this reality. My friends argue for maintenance of the status quo. They don't believe the world has changed; we do believe it has changed. I think Ontarians understand that and I think they know that we need to do certain things that are different. Some of those things may not be easy, but they want to know what we need to do to make our economy stronger so that it can sustain good jobs and good public services.

We are absolutely convinced, on the basis of all the information that's there for everybody to see, that we've got to move forward with the harmonized sales tax as the foundation for a stronger economy, good jobs and good public services.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a question for the Minister of Finance. Until media scrums yesterday, Minister Dun-

can didn't have much to say about the Casino Niagara deal or Bob Lopinski's success fee. Minister Duncan said that timelines gave him no option but to defy the Premier's ban on untendered contracts for this Casino Niagara lease. But if the only option was to proceed with another untendered contract, why did the landlord hire the same lobbyist who did the Maid of the Mist deal? In fact, if it was the only option, why hire a Liberal lobbyist at all?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I can't comment on why that individual or organization would hire anybody, for that matter, but I can tell you that Charles Harnick and Don Cousens, two former Tory members, are part of that firm. I would remind my colleague opposite that, in fact, the government that he was part of renegotiated precisely the same—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind my colleague opposite that the government he was part of renegotiated the same lease. Those negotiations are under way right now.

What I'm particularly proud of is that the member for Niagara Falls and the Premier of Ontario committed to keeping two casinos open in Niagara Falls. I'm also proud that we're investing in a convention centre for Niagara Falls, because that will help that economy get through.

I'd remind my colleague opposite that your colleague in the back row suggested that maybe we should close casinos, which I don't think is the appropriate response at this time. I'm sure my friend the Leader of the Opposition would want to stand up for Niagara Falls—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Norm Miller: This has nothing to do with closing casinos; it's about them changing their rules. Apparently, someone thought this lease needed to be tendered. The Toronto Sun reports that there is "a 53-page draft RFP for the lease, on OLG stationery." But the McGuinty Liberals chose to do a rich, sole-source contract with a client of the Premier's former political adviser.

This is another untendered deal, after you promised they'd stop. It was the Premier who set the bar. His former staffer is the registered lobbyist.

Was it Minister Duncan or Minister Smitherman who blocked the tendering process so a Liberal-friendly lobbyist could collect his success fee?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I apologize, but what my colleague opposite neglected to tell the House and the people of Ontario is that in the contract they signed, they put a renewal clause in the contract. You put that in there, and I think your government did it because they understood that you simply cannot up and move a casino outside of—and that, by the way, is a normal process. So in fact, the renewal clause was put into the agreement by the previous government. That lease is under negotiation now, as I understand it, between the owner of the facility and the OLG.

We did follow the rule that you put into the contract to allow us to renew the lease if that were deemed by the OLG to be the appropriate decision.

1100

TAXATION

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Premier. Today, a broad coalition of Ontarians who know that the HST will hurt seniors and retirees very hard are here at Queen's Park. These folks are not from chambers of commerce; they are hard-working, taxpaying people who are fed up. They know the HST will raise their cost of living, from condo fees to utilities to coffee at Tim's, sports and recreation fees and even their investment portfolios. Municipal retirees, police pensioners, retired firefighters and the Police Retirees of Ontario aren't fooled by this government's one-time bribe of \$300. They know they will end up paying more for less. When will this government do something right for Ontario and end this egregious and unfair tax grab?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Revenue.

Hon. John Wilkinson: When I heard the member ask the question, there was one salient fact that he missed: We are permanently cutting income taxes on January 1 for 93% of Ontarians, and there is no group of Ontarians who will receive more benefits than our seniors. It is the way that we can honour the contributions that our seniors have made. So we've ensured that these permanent income tax cuts are being applied on January 1. I didn't hear that in your question.

We know that in the first year it will be a year of transition, and that's why we have secured a historic agreement with the federal government to ensure that there is sufficient support for our consumers, particularly our seniors, in that first year.

We've embarked on this tax reform—something we haven't done in this province in over 40 years—because we recognize that the world has changed. It is important for us to understand that change and figure out how we can have an even—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: I don't think any of the people here today are going to accept that answer. I certainly don't.

It's not just the groups that I referred to in the first part of the question who are angered by this tax grab; it's also our Ontario realtors and potential homebuyers. Yesterday, I had the opportunity to meet with the chair of government relations for the Ontario Real Estate Association, Barb Sukkau. She reminded me that the real estate market plummeted for two years as a result of the GST. Now this government wants to increase taxes on homebuyers by adding on 8% to real estate fees. OREA predicts that this tax grab will have a devastating effect on what is presently a solid real estate market.

My question: Why is this government hell-bent on putting the brakes on a thriving real estate market and

putting the livelihoods of many real estate professionals at risk?

Hon. John Wilkinson: A precondition for a thriving real estate market is people working. What we have to do is work hard to get people back to work by understanding that reality.

I say, as someone who has been in business for over 20 years before I came to this place, it is important that we are permanently reducing the costs for businesses in the province of Ontario. When we look at the report from TD Economics, a third party, a distinguished economist says that some 80% of those savings will be passed through to consumers in the first year. So we are permanently reducing the cost of business in the province.

We know that it'll be very important for us to support the consumer in the first year, but we also know that those permanent tax cuts, not only for people but also for business, are what we need in this economy so that we can go back to generating high-quality jobs in the 21st century. Again, what we need is a vibrant economy, one that is adding wealth, and we are taking the necessary steps to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities: Minister, a lot of hard-working constituents in my riding have been complaining about these private career colleges, the ones that pretend to give a degree or certificate in some area of expertise, but when they get this certificate or degree, they find out it's worthless. They charge them exorbitant fees. They're basically con artists.

What are you doing as minister to shut down these fraudulent, rip-off private career colleges which are abusing the good name of the good colleges? What are you doing, Mr. Minister? Let me know.

Hon. John Milloy: At the outset, I want to recognize the fact that the vast majority of private career colleges in the province of Ontario provide a valuable service in terms of education and training. But, as the honourable member points out, there are bad actors, and I'm very pleased to announce to the Legislature that, beginning November 1, 2009, Ontario will levy fines on private career colleges that offer unapproved programs and fail to comply with the Private Career Colleges Act. Penalties will range from \$250 to \$1,000 for a first offence and can escalate, with repeat offences, to a maximum of \$250,000. Fines can be levied for a range of offences, including misleading advertising, operating an unregistered private career college and offering a program that has—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary? The member from Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Fines are one way that we can encourage owners of private colleges to comply with the law, but that's only one piece of the puzzle. Dishonest owners of these colleges have targeted certain particular

groups—in particular, new Canadians and international students. I've heard that much of the information on these private colleges is often confusing and difficult to navigate. It's especially a problem with students whose first language is not English. Some prospective colleges are offering courses and commitments that just don't make any sense and don't exist in reality.

Minister, what are we doing to help those students, especially those students whose first language is not English and who are perhaps from foreign countries?

Hon. John Milloy: The key is really making sure that prospective students are armed with the information they need about the private career college that they're interested in pursuing, and I'm pleased to announce that we'll be launching a student-awareness campaign that will give students better information before choosing a private career college. We're working with many of our education partners, including high schools, settlement offices and our Employment Ontario network, in an effort to reach out to students to help them understand what a private career college is and what they should be looking for before enrolling.

In addition, we are appointing new provincial offences officers in the private career colleges enforcement and compliance unit. This will lessen the time it takes to pursue legal action against an illegal PCC.

We take the protection of our students very seriously, and through the measures that we've outlined today, we're going to make sure that they're receiving the education that they're paying for and that we can eradicate some of the bad actors that unfortunately exist out there.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is for the Minister of Finance. Since the summer of scandal began, the McGuinty Liberals have been distracted by a billion-dollar eHealth scandal, an expense scandal at OLG, the WSIB and a brewing scandal over off-the-book construction of an energy centre in your riding. At the time the OLG and eHealth scandals came to light, you and the Premier hastily assembled press conferences to announce legislation to fix the culture of entitlement in the McGuinty government.

Is it true that, four weeks ago, on your watch, at the same time Bill 201 was being debated, OLG sole-sourced an untendered deal to H.H. Angus for the management of the Windsor Energy Centre?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the energy centre, as the member correctly noted, was constructed at Casino Windsor. It is now the subject of civil action. As the member knows, there was an injunction—

Interjections.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: They don't want to hear it.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: They just don't want to hear the answer.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I can't hear him.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Well, I can't hear him either.

Mr. John Yakabuski: He's not saying anything.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: An injunction was sought. OLG took possession of the energy centre itself. They had, in fact, engaged the services of the company noted to go in and continue to run the energy centre in order to keep the facility supplied with power, as I understand it.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'll take that as a yes.

The energy centre is linked to expansion of the Windsor casino and convention centre, which is playing host to the Ontario Liberal convention this weekend. Perhaps among his Liberal friends, Minister Duncan won't have to answer questions about his complete defiance of the Premier's edict against sole-source contracts, but he should be ready to answer them in this place. The sole-source deal to operate the energy centre pays H.H. Angus \$15,000 per day. That's \$6 million per year. Minister, do you consider the practice of handing a sole-source untendered contract to Angus to be fair play, hypocritical, or just business as usual for the McGuinty Liberals?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will ask the honourable member to withdraw an unparliamentary—

Mr. Peter Shurman: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: A temporary arrangement was entered into in order to facilitate keeping the lights on.

With respect to the significance of building a convention centre and hotel facility in order to allow that casino to compete against large casinos across the river that have had enormous investments, absolutely we're doing that, sir. Are we supporting the tourism industry in Ontario? Absolutely, we're supporting the tourism industry in Ontario. When one looks at the revenue that that facility has produced over the last 15 years for Ontario, it becomes clear that it was a wise decision taken by the government of the day to construct it, the NDP government. It was a wise decision of the government of the day to expand the facility and make sure that it operated. And we took the proper decisions—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Minister of Labour. Minister, in early 2008, the Toronto Star exposed the complete—complete—disconnect between the WSIB experience rating program and health and safety. The WSIB was awarding large rebates to employers who had been prosecuted or convicted for occupational fatalities. The Star series made it clear that the experience rating program actually rewards companies for under-reporting workplace injuries.

The McGuinty government has the authority to put a stop to this program immediately. Why won't this government put an end to the seriously flawed experience rating program immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question. The member is well aware that the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board did place a moratorium on any employer that has had a workplace fatality; those employers do not qualify today for a rebate. The member is also aware that the WSIB has retained a third party to review the program and to offer suggested revisions. The report was released publicly. It's assisting the chair with his discussions, conversations with stakeholders.

The member opposite, I believe, would approve of initiatives that help reduce workplace injuries and death in the workplace. That is what the experience rating program does. The WSIB is working hard to ensure that we give incentives to employers to keep their workplaces safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: That is not what the experience rating program does, and you know it. For years, the NDP, injured workers and the labour movement have called for an end to the perverse incentives that employers receive under the WSIB experience rating program. In 2008, the WSIB hired the firm of Morneau Sobeco to review the experience rating program, which confirmed that employers not reporting workplace injuries is common in order to get a WSIB experience rating rebate. In fact, from 1998 to 2007, refunds to employers exceeded surcharges by \$800 million.

It's time to put an end to this disgraceful program. Will this government finally do the right thing and kill the WSIB experience rating program immediately?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is very unfortunate that this member dismisses the fact that workplace safety incentive programs result in lower workplace injuries and death. The McGuinty government from day one has been committed to making our workplaces safer in Ontario. Since 2004, we have lowered the rate of lost-time injury by over 25% across Ontario. That's been done through enforcement personnel, targeted blitzes and safety incentives. Working with employers, employees and labour, we have made great progress—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would remind the honourable member from Hamilton East that he just asked a question and I would encourage him to listen to the answer.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member opposite, if the member opposite has some helpful suggestions, I would encourage the member to contact the chair of the WSIB. I spoke with the chair yesterday. He'd be more than open to discuss these very important matters.

TAXATION

Mr. Mario Sergio: My question is for the Minister of Revenue. Minister, seniors are concerned about how the HST will affect them. We are hearing this concern from the seniors gathered here at Queen's Park today.

Minister, my riding of York West has perhaps one of the largest seniors' populations in Ontario, with the majority

of them living at the threshold of minimum wage. A few may be above that, but many others are making barely over \$20,000 a year.

They have been hearing much about the HST. Some people are trying to misrepresent the facts, saying seniors are getting one-time cheques but paying a permanent increase in tax rates. That is the last thing seniors want to hear.

Through you to the minister, Speaker, I would like to ask, for the benefit of all Ontario seniors, can you shed some light on what the HST will mean for them, especially as we are getting closer to the date of implementation?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question and reiterate the fact that we are permanently cutting income taxes for some 93% of Ontarians. As a matter of fact, some 90,000 Ontarians will no longer pay provincial income tax to the province of Ontario.

I want to say particularly to seniors who are challenged with low income that we are going to be there for them. Many seniors today receive the GST rebate from the federal government. That's some \$240. If a senior is receiving that, I can assure them that that will be increased by an additional \$260 a year and that that increase is permanent. That is the thing that people need to remember.

Beyond that, we're also increasing the property and sales tax credits some \$420 million for seniors. We're more than doubling the senior property tax credit from \$250 to \$500. That provides some \$1 billion worth of tax relief for seniors over the next few years. All of those measures are permanent—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Mario Sergio: It sounds very encouraging for seniors, as they would welcome any additional help. Many seniors rely on Canada Pension and old age security as their only source of income.

Minister, we should support seniors who want the dignity of living in their own homes. On top of the day-to-day expenses of maintaining their homes, seniors living on a fixed income are concerned that the prices of the things they need are going to increase. For example, food under \$4 is now going to be subject to an 8% increase. Therefore, it would help to know what seniors are required to do in order to receive their income tax cuts and rebates.

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would say to seniors that it's very important for them to file their 2009 tax return. Because of that 2009 tax return, we're going to be able, starting next year, to provide transitional cheques. We know that many seniors don't file their income tax until the end of the year and we know that these permanent tax cuts may take some time to work their way through the economy. That's why we've reached a historic agreement with the federal government to provide in that first year, in the year of transition, tax-free cheques. It requires a person to file their income tax return, because for a single, including a senior, who makes less than \$80,000 a

year—and that's the vast majority of seniors—they will receive some \$300 tax-free by way of three cheques.

For a senior couple, if their income combined is less than \$160,000—and that is the vast majority of senior couples—they will receive some \$1,000 tax-free by way of cheques in that first year. Then, of course, they'll be able to file their income tax returns and qualify for exactly the tax—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

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WASTE DISPOSAL

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Minister of the Environment: Minister, last week, under cover of the \$24.7-billion deficit, you announced that the cost of business will be getting even more expensive: You're demanding that business and industry pay 100% of blue box fees. You refuse to be a 100% payer of programs run by municipalities; how can you justify imposing 100% of costs on business? They can't even access the recycled aluminum or steel.

So, Minister, in the midst of a recession, when your government has overseen the loss of 330,000 manufacturing jobs, why would you add yet another tax on business in Ontario?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, the member is totally mischaracterizing what we're actually doing. We are moving to extended producer responsibility with respect to the disposal of waste. We're doing that with respect to the blue box program. And I must say that municipalities are totally supportive of this. We simply believe that the producers have to take responsibility for the waste they generate, particularly at the end of the life cycle of any products that are out there. That same principle is being adopted with respect to municipal hazardous waste, tire recycling and the electronic waste that is produced in the province of Ontario.

I can tell you, from meeting with many business groups, they are onside; they believe that we're heading the right way. It's not only a good environmental policy, it's also a good economic policy for Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Well, it's a policy that's going to kill jobs, I can tell you that. When economic conditions deteriorate, truly it's the optimism and resilience of small business that get us through the tough times. Small businesses create jobs, and the saving grace for many of these small businesses is the threshold that exempts those with under \$2 million in sales from paying blue box fees.

This is my question: Are you now planning to tax them into closing up shop for good?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we're not increasing anybody's taxes. All of these funds are going to the appropriate stewardship council funds. And he couldn't be more wrong: There are great businesses being started in Ontario that are taking advantage of the economic opportunities that this—we're talking about GEEP, which

does great electronic recycling in the Barrie area. Sims in the Mississauga area is doing exactly the same thing. We're talking about tire recycling that is being done by organizations like Perth Recycling in the Stratford area. There are companies that are being set up all across this province that are taking advantage of the great economic opportunities that these environmental policies that we're implementing lend to them. They are employing the people of Ontario. It's not only a good economic instrument but it's a great environmental initiative as well.

PENSION PLANS

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. Nortel is restructuring under the creditors' act. Its \$3-billion pension shortfall will mean a cut of 30% or more to the benefits of its 20,000 employees.

Earlier this week, Quebec announced that it would safeguard the pensions of Nortel employees in that province by taking over the remaining pension assets. The Quebec and US governments have responded to the Nortel pension crisis and have extended a helping hand to Nortel employees living within their jurisdictions. My question is, why isn't this government doing the same thing for those workers?

Hon. George Smitherman: To the Minister of Finance.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The member opposite mischaracterizes what Quebec did. They are not topping up the pension. What the government of Quebec is doing is exactly what we would do in the same circumstances: They're agreeing to manage whatever funds would be left in that pension, should it be wound up. It would not be appropriate to characterize it as doing anything different than Ontario is doing.

I should also remind the member that the United States' equivalent of the pension benefits guarantee fund is under water, and there's a view that it cannot sustain the pressures that it is faced with.

This is an enormous challenge, and we are committed to continuing to work to bring about reform, not only to pensions but to the entire post-retirement income system. I think the member ought to be careful how she characterizes what Quebec is doing because Ontario already does that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister needs to be careful how he characterizes the question that is asked to him. It has been almost a year since the Arthurs report was delivered to this minister. It recommended an increase to the monthly benefit that the pension benefits guarantee fund provides, to the tune of about \$2,500 monthly. That \$2,500 monthly guarantee would go a long way towards safeguarding the pensions not just of Nortel workers but of thousands of other Ontario workers whose pensions currently are hanging in the balance.

Why is this government leaving Nortel employees out in the cold by refusing to table legislation to increase the monthly benefit guaranteed by the pension benefits guar-

antee fund to \$2,500, as was very clearly recommended in the Arthurs report?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I take it, then, that the member is endorsing all the Arthurs recommendations and would call on a massive increase in what employees have to contribute in order to fund the PBGF. I'd urge her great caution and to read all the recommendations in the context of the other ones.

I'd also recommend that she recognize that we are in fact doing what Professor Arthurs has recommended. We have engaged an actuarial study to see what it would take to make the pension benefits guarantee fund solvent. Government after government of all political stripes in this province over the last 20 years has refused to deal with that fundamental challenge. In fact, one government specifically exempted certain big companies as being too big to fail.

I think it's disingenuous to take one recommendation out of Arthurs and not look at all of them, and I think it's also disingenuous to suggest that Quebec is doing anything differently than Ontario is already. We will continue to work with those pensioners and those communities facing this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question?

MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Minister, yesterday, as part of the good government bill, changes to the Municipal Elections Act were announced. I believe many of these changes are certainly overdue and will provide for a more fair and transparent process during our municipal elections.

During the debate, the member for Beaches–East York stated that the change in date for municipal elections will mean that, every seven elections, the election day will fall on Halloween. Turnout during elections is slow as it is. To have an election fall on such an important date for families with young children will make it even harder. Why did you make this change and is there anything that can be done to bring about a change?

Hon. Jim Watson: I heard the assertion made by the honourable member, and I asked our ministry staff to look into it. I'd encourage the member from the NDP to go to a bank and get one of those free calendars, because it is mathematically impossible for October 31 to fall on the fourth Monday in October. So that clarifies that point.

We're making this change to increase turnout and to make it safer for those campaigning because daylight savings time will take place after the fourth Monday in October. It's also very beneficial for our senior citizens, some of whom go to warmer climates in November and December. We want to make sure that our seniors have an ample opportunity to vote in municipal elections. It's also safer. We heard from a number of groups, including some women candidates, who wanted to campaign in better climates, more daylight. The change is a good

thing to increase voter turnout and we encourage all members of the House to vote for this piece of legislation.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Minister. That is good news. I'm also pleased that young families won't be negatively impacted by this change, as Halloween is coming up this week and it is important to the kids.

There have been numerous stories and reports on changes that are needed to make our municipal elections more transparent and more fair. Many complain that incumbents have an unfair advantage over potential opponents and there are ever-present concerns about the influence that financial contributions can have. I was also struck to learn that proper identification was not required and of numerous problems with the compiling of the voters lists.

Minister, what other changes are being made to the Municipal Elections Act?

1130

Hon. Jim Watson: The practice at the ministry is that after every municipal election our staff conduct a review in consultation with AMO, the association of clerks and treasurers, Elections Ontario and MPAC.

The proposed changes will, among other things, bring in strict new caps, similar to provincial laws, that would limit the amount of money a company or individual can donate in a municipality. Candidates, on a go-forward basis, will not be able to keep surpluses and carry them over to the next election, thus levelling the playing field. We are requiring voter identification requirements that are in line with provincial elections. We are making changes that will allow for greater accuracy when it comes to the voters list. We're promoting greater accessibility for candidates and voters with disabilities, including, for the first time, ensuring that all polling stations are accessible to those individuals with disabilities in the province of Ontario. Regrettably, that was never the case before.

These changes will make for a more transparent, efficient and effective process, and we look forward to all members supporting this legislation in this House.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: My question is in follow-up to a question I put on Monday regarding the DriveTest strike that's now in its 10th week. Jobs are being lost; lives are being disrupted.

I have an e-mail, which is one of many, from a DriveTest employee. They want to get back to work as well, and I want to read from that e-mail: "We have an offer that our union refuses to let us vote on until Serco deems it to be a 'final offer.' The Ministry of Labour mediator has issued his second 'cooling-off period' (the first one lasted a month and a half) which is also frustrating."

I asked the minister on Monday why he will not ask his colleague the Minister of Labour to direct that offer to

be put to the employees so that this strike can be dealt with.

Hon. James J. Bradley: In fact, I'll allow him to ask the Minister of Labour himself.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question, and I thank the Minister of Transportation and the Ministry of Labour officials as we continue to work with the parties and urge them to come to the table to resolve their differences. We highly respect the collective bargaining agreement process. The member is quite right when he speaks about our mediators; we have some of the best mediators in the world. And we have one of the best labour relations records in the world; 97% of all collective agreements are done without work stoppage. There are some agreements that are challenging, there are bumps in the road, and I ask the parties to come to the table, roll up their sleeves, work together and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The sleeves are rolled up and we're seeing no results. What I'm saying is that the Minister of Transportation has a responsibility to ensure that these services are delivered to Ontarians. Serco has a responsibility contractually to deliver them. For the last 10 weeks, that hasn't been happening. The Minister of Labour has the ability under legislation, under section 41—just so that he can check it out himself—of the Labour Relations Act, to force a vote; that is his responsibility. His mediator is not successful. Employees at Serco want to have the vote. They want to get back to work, and people across this province want and need those services. Why will the minister not assume his responsibility and ensure that that vote takes place?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: As I said, there are at times disputes that may be difficult. That is why the Ministry of Labour has conciliators and mediators to be there to assist those parties to resolve those differences. I understand, as the Minister of Transportation and many in our communities understand, the difficulties that this imposes on those who want to get a driver's licence and those who need to renew their driver's licence. So we continue to work with the parties, to encourage them to come to the table to resolve those differences.

As I have said, we have a tremendous record in labour relations in this province. I want to commend those who are at the table, who are working hard, who are making concessions and finding that common ground to get a collective agreement done.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Finance. Minister, you'll know that the Ontario municipal partnership fund is a very important component of the funding that the province provides the municipalities. And you'll also know—and if you don't know, I'm telling you now—that there are a whole bunch of municipalities that are being told that the one-time funding that

they've been getting for the last four or five years is going to be cut in this budget year.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no—one-time funding that has been funded for the last five years, and if members paid attention to municipal funding, they would know that.

My question to you is: Will you continue the one-time funding, as we have for the last four years?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I thank the member for the question. He's absolutely right about the amount of money this government has transferred to municipalities since taking office. I'd like to review some of them. Under the provincial-municipal review, by 2018, we will have increased operating support to municipalities by \$2.7 billion or 250%. We are uploading Ontario Works benefits, saving municipalities \$425 million by 2018. In addition, we're uploading court costs, saving municipalities \$125 million. I should add that this is in addition to the increased operating supports that we've provided municipalities, up \$1.1 billion between taking office and today.

This government has, I think, the best track record in dealing with our municipal partners. We—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We'll soon find out later on this year. The fact that you don't want to answer the question, "Will you, yes or no, renew the funding?," and instead talk about everything else tells me and tells municipalities that you're contemplating it. For many municipalities across Ontario, and in my riding in particular, if one-time funding is taken away, they're going to have to put the padlock on the municipal offices because they will not be able to afford to pay for such services as police, social services and others because it's a huge part of their budgets.

I ask you once again: Yes or no; will the government continue one-time funding in the next fiscal year?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I remind the member opposite that Timmins, which I know is very familiar to him, will receive \$14 million in OMPF funding for 2009.

I'd really like to know why the member and his NDP friends voted against the Investing in Ontario Act—\$1 billion in transfers to municipalities. Maybe we'd like to know why the NDP voted against uploading public health. They voted against gas tax funding for transit. They voted against increased funding for the arts through municipalities. They voted against our infrastructure for roads and bridges funding. That party is a sorry excuse for a party when it comes to municipal support.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I have a point of order which I've expressed in this House in the past. This House has a long tradition, and quite frankly, Mr. Speaker, when you reviewed my point of order in the past, you concurred with my findings.

Earlier in the House today the member from Eglinton—Lawrence asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities a question whereby his first response appeared to give an announcement, with a new date starting on the first of the coming month, of a new program that would take place. I would suggest that announcements of this nature, if it was an announcement, would be far more properly found in ministerial statements. I would ask for your review and reporting back to the House on the point of order.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a point of order, and I thank the honourable member for the point of order. It's actually one of the reasons why it is helpful that the tone be kept down in the chamber because there are times when the Speaker himself finds it's difficult to hear questions or answers. I will commit to reviewing the Hansard and will report back to the House.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 71(b), the House leader of the official opposition has filed notice of his intention to file a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. The bill may therefore not be called during orders of the day today.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1140 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: It is my pleasure to welcome some of the members of the executive of the Greek Community of Toronto, who will be celebrating their 100th anniversary. They're just coming in right now. It's Mr. Costas Menegakis, Gail Menegakis, Crist Geronikolos, Eleni Tsikritsis, Yannis Kakagiannis, Vlasia Economou and Bessie Anagnostopoulos. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome in the Speaker's gallery a good friend of mine, Mr. Vane Chute. Vane is here representing the Tillsonburg real estate board. He's also a former reeve of Bayham township and a former warden of the county of Elgin. Welcome to Queen's Park, Vane.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

CHICKEN FARMERS

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, who are here today at Queen's Park. I want to thank them for coming to share their concerns and let us know the state of their industry. I'm pleased to hear that they are doing very well.

Ontario chicken farmers make a huge contribution to the province. They employ 5,000 people directly and thousands more indirectly through transportation and foodservices.

Ontario families depend on our chicken farmers to produce high-quality, safe and healthy chicken—and they deliver. The nearly 1,100 chicken farmers in Ontario produce 330 million kilograms of chickens annually. I want to particularly recognize the 87 chicken farmers who are located in the great riding of Oxford who produce 35 million kilos of chicken.

We recognize the importance of the orderly marketing system known as supply management to ensure continued success for the chicken industry. On behalf of the PC caucus and our leader, Tim Hudak, I want to assure the Chicken Farmers of Ontario that they have our continued support for protecting supply management.

Later today, the chicken farmers will be meeting with our leader, Tim Hudak, and I to update us on the results of their strategic planning process and the exciting new initiative they are launching here at Queen's Park today. I'm looking forward to that meeting and I encourage all members, if they haven't already done so, to take some time today to meet with the chicken farmers or to attend their reception this evening down in the legislative dining room to hear the great things they are doing to help build their industry.

ELECTRIC TRAINS

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to invite anyone who is listening to come to a meeting. It's going to be held tomorrow night, October 29, from 7 to 9 p.m. at the Arraymusic Studio, 60 Atlantic Avenue, suite 218. It's about clean electric trains.

We have two guest speakers who are going to talk about why electric over diesel. They are Mike Sullivan, who is the chair of the Weston Community Coalition and a member of the Clean Train Coalition; we also have Dr. Regenstreif, a resident of Trinity-Spadina, who is a retired architect, urbanist and consultant in energy management. He has written extensively on railway electrification in Canada and Europe.

The purpose of the meeting is to try to persuade the government, more than anyone else—because I suspect the people who are going to come tomorrow night want clean electric trains. This government has a love affair with diesel; we don't understand why. But it's a love affair, an obsession with dirty diesel that nobody really wants. What many of the people want is a commitment from this government to do it right from the beginning. Don't spend on tier 4 diesel trains that are not going to be available for five years and are going to be very expensive. Spend on the right clean train electricity today and do it right.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

Mr. Bill Mauro: Yesterday, I had an opportunity to be in Thunder Bay for a fantastic announcement. I was

there with Michael Power, the CEO of the Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute; Keith Jobbitt, the chair; Cameron Piron, the president and CEO of Sentinelle imaging; Steve Demmings from the CEDC in Thunder Bay; and Mayor Peterson to announce a fantastic partnership between the parent company, Sentinelle, and Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute in Thunder Bay.

Sentinelle will be spinning off a company to be called Tornado Medical Systems. They're a medical imaging company. This particular company, it's anticipated, is going to provide, according to Cameron Piron, the president and CEO, 50 jobs in this particular field by April 2010. Mr. Piron went on to say to the group in attendance that it's his full anticipation that by 2012 he expects there to be 300 jobs associated with this particular company.

I link this back to something that we did three or four years ago, when the Premier took what was then the Ontario Innovation Trust and spun it into the Ministry of Research and Innovation, creating for the first time in the province of Ontario a ministry dedicated to research and innovation, seeing the importance of it, and appointing himself the minister of this particular ministry. Through that ministry, three or four years ago, we were able to secure investment of about \$15 million in what was then called the Molecular Medicine Research Centre, which has now become Thunder Bay Regional Research Institute. It is through that investment, along with investment that came later from the federal government and an investment from the city of Thunder Bay, that MMRC was established. Three or four years later we continue to see the benefit of that investment, justifying a decision we made three or four years ago.

It's a great example of where good public policy can be good for the economy. I think of our environmental policy not too long ago, which has led to major investments by our government in mass transit and has created hundreds of good-paying jobs at Bombardier in Thunder Bay. Similarly, the announcement of this \$15 million three or four years ago has led to a diversification of Thunder Bay's economy and more job creation as well.

TELEVISION INDUSTRY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I raise an issue that has great consequences for every person in Ontario, especially outside of Toronto. Local television and local TV news are in trouble. Stations are being closed in communities across Ontario and Canada. Other stations in Ontario are being given away for next to nothing. Consider that CHCH-TV in Hamilton was recently sold for \$12 cash. One of the cable companies agreed to purchase another Ontario station for \$1, but that deal fell through. Compare this with the recent sale of Mountain View Cable, a cable system serving only part of the city of Hamilton, for a quarter-billion dollars—that's "billion." Guess who bought it? One of our profit-rich cable companies that hate competition.

The business model that over-the-air television has operated under is broken. An imbalance exists between

the stations and the distribution companies, and if it isn't fixed, communities like mine will lose their local stations and their local news.

Local television stations must be compensated for their signal by the distribution companies, and there is no reason for the public to pay more to the cable companies. I urge all members of this House and concerned citizens of Ontario to complain to the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission at their website, crtc.gc.ca, and encourage them to fix this problem before it is too late.

INTERNATIONAL CREDIT UNION DAY

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: On October 15, I had the pleasure of visiting Central 1, a company in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South. The purpose of my visit was to join in their celebration of International Credit Union Day.

International Credit Union Day has been celebrated by the World Council of Credit Unions on the third Thursday of October every year since 1948. The day is set aside to reflect upon the history of the credit union movement and to promote the achievements of credit unions. Every year, International Credit Union Day raises awareness about the great work that credit unions are doing for their members.

It gives me great pride to see companies in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South providing great services to the community. I would like to congratulate the staff at Central 1 for the work they do for their members to reach their financial goals. Central 1 is helping credit unions build a greater economy.

I look forward to visiting Central 1 to celebrate International Credit Union Day next year.

1510

CANADIAN CLUB MOVEMENT

Mr. John O'Toole: I rise in this House to pay tribute to the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club on its 100th anniversary, which will be celebrated on November 18.

Robert McCullough, a founder of the Canadian Club movement in Canada, was born in Bowmanville. He moved to Hamilton in 1888, where he and four friends would launch an organization dedicated to the study of Canada's history, literature, resources and talents. In 1909, a central Canadian Club association was formed. It had branches throughout the Dominion of Canada.

It is a fitting tribute to the vision of Robert McCullough that the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club still meets in Mr. McCullough's hometown. On November 18, club president Harold Yellowlees and members of the Bowmanville Men's Canadian Club will be celebrating the 100th anniversary celebration.

I am pleased to pay tribute to the proud Canadians who belong to this organization and, more specifically, those in my riding of Durham. I wish all members and all people who are in support of the vision of the Canadian

Club movement to celebrate this event with pride in a country which celebrates multiculturalism as well as leadership, in a country that is very tolerant and forthcoming for all Canadians.

RENEWABLE ENERGY

Mr. David Oraziotti: I'm pleased today to share with members in the House the remarkable progress my riding has made thanks to our government's effective renewable energy strategy. As a result, Sault Ste. Marie is on its way to becoming a North American leader in green energy initiatives. We recognize that promoting a dynamic, innovative and growing green economy will foster job growth in our community.

Just this week, Elementa Group signed a deal to construct a full-scale waste-to-energy conversion plant, after our government provided \$50,000 and technical expertise for a pilot project. The project will provide the technology for Sault Ste. Marie to become Canada's first jurisdiction to have all curbside waste diverted from its municipal landfill site in the form of a green energy project.

This initiative is part of our government's strategy to help support green energy products and projects in Ontario. Power-purchase agreements through our renewable energy programs have facilitated many projects in my community: a \$400-million investment by Brookfield Renewable Power to build the largest wind farm in the province of Ontario; a \$360-million investment by Pod solar to create a 60-megawatt solar project; and a \$135-million investment by Essar Steel to build a 70-megawatt cogen plant, eliminating 400 tonnes of nitrous oxide from the atmosphere. We're also investing in a tire recycling project that is currently under construction and a methane collection system at the local landfill to reduce greenhouse gases.

These projects have helped to diversify my community of Sault Ste. Marie, helped our community become a leader in the new green economy, and perhaps most importantly, created exciting new technology jobs that will allow Sault Ste. Marie to attract and retain talented young workers. We're watching too many of our youth over the last number of years leave the north for other opportunities.

GREEK COMMUNITY

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: On October 30, the Greek Community of Toronto will be celebrating their 100th anniversary. Since 1909, they have provided a supportive network for Greek culture to flourish in Toronto. From helping Greek newcomers to settle in the city, to preserving Greek language and traditions in their new home, the Greek Community of Toronto has been and it continues to be critically important for those of Hellenic descent in the greater Toronto area.

I would also like to recognize a very important day for Greeks all around the world. Today is Oxi Day. Sixty-

nine years ago, the Greeks said “Oxi,” or “No,” to a demand to submit to foreign occupation. Instead, guided by courage and optimism, the Greeks chose the path of resistance. Four years later, they regained control of their country.

Oxi Day and the centennial of the Greek Community of Toronto is a time to reflect on the values of the Greek people: the importance of community, the importance of sacrifice and the importance of justice. Celebrating Oxi Day is an example of how our traditions and cultures have been preserved by organizations like the Greek Community of Toronto.

I would like to thank Mr. Costas Menegakis, the president, and the rest of the Greek Community of Toronto's executives for being here today. I look forward to another century of success from this wonderful organization.

Lastly, I would like to say: Zito H Ellas, Zito O Kanadas.

CHICKEN FARMERS

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to welcome the Chicken Farmers of Ontario as they once again bring us their popular wings-and-beer reception in the legislative dining room. Others will have already told you about the contribution of broiler chicken producers to the economy of Ontario. But my involvement with the industry is of a more personal nature. As you well know, the feather industry has been very good to my family over the years.

This summer, Rene and I entered our 40th year as farmers—18 of them as part of the Chicken Farmers of Ontario, and we are proud to be counted among their numbers. Like all farming, this sector requires hard work, taking risks, making large investments of time and money, and, yes, off-farm jobs as needed. But as a supply-managed commodity, chicken production is predictable—for the producer in terms of expectations and incomes, and for the consumer in terms of quality, price and supply.

Rene and I are proof that you can start a business from scratch and build something that your son, his wife, and their young family will want to take over. And that's what's happening this fall, actually in a matter of weeks. Rene and I are moving into a new home so that we can step aside for the next generation as they come on to our farm.

Rene and I want to say thank you very much to the Chicken Farmers of Ontario for your support and your leadership in the past 18 years, and now for our next generation in the future.

MOTIONS

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's kind of hard to follow that, but I'll do my best. I seek unanimous consent to put

forward a motion without notice regarding private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that, notwithstanding standing order 98(g), notice for ballot item 45 be waived.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Motions? I will revert to introduction of bills.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

FIRE PROTECTION AND PREVENTION AMENDMENT ACT (FIRE SPRINKLER RETROFITTING), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA PRÉVENTION ET LA PROTECTION CONTRE L'INCENDIE (INSTALLATION RÉTROACTIVE D'EXTINCTEURS AUTOMATIQUES)

Mr. Sergio moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997 with respect to fire sprinkler retrofitting / Projet de loi 214, Loi modifiant la Loi de 1997 sur la prévention et la protection contre l'incendie à l'égard de l'installation rétroactive d'extincteurs automatiques.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Mario Sergio: The bill amends the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, to require that specified care occupancies that have been in existence since before March 16, 1998, be equipped with a system of automatic sprinklers.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I'm pleased to rise in this House to welcome to Ontario the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, the leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations, and the ministers of aboriginal affairs from each of the provinces and territories. This group includes the Premiers of Nova Scotia and Northwest Territories.

1520

This occasion marks the first time since the Kelowna Accord meeting in 2005 that aboriginal issues will be brought to the table for discussion among national, provincial, territorial and aboriginal leaders. This represents the dramatic shift in leadership on aboriginal issues taking place nationally. The provinces, territories and national aboriginal organizations are now seizing the leadership on this issue.

This summer, Premier Dalton McGuinty, his fellow Premiers, and aboriginal leaders met prior to the Council of the Federation to discuss how to address issues facing aboriginal people in Canada. The Premiers of Canada's 10 provinces and three territories agreed to direct their respective ministers responsible for aboriginal affairs to form a working group. This working group includes the participation and support of the Assembly of First Nations, Métis National Council, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, and Native Women's Association of Canada.

Today this working group will determine how the federal government, provinces and territories, and aboriginal organizations can work more effectively to improve outcomes for aboriginal people. A revitalized federal-provincial-territorial and aboriginal, or FPTA, process will help everyone work together to ensure that aboriginal issues maintain a high national profile. The FPTA process will allow us to work collaboratively on mutual goals and will enable the federal government, provinces, territories and aboriginal organizations to complement one another's policies, programs and areas of expertise.

I'm pleased to be able to say that our Premier was one of the first leaders to call for a First Ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, as have other Premiers across the country.

Other provincial Premiers have also been asserting themselves on aboriginal issues, demonstrating how critical these challenges are. Through this new national process, we intend to follow up on their direction and work toward a future First Ministers' conference.

We will also be addressing two broad quality-of-life priorities during tomorrow's meeting: lifelong learning, specifically education and skills development, and economic development. As a government and as a civil society, we have a moral obligation to address the wrongs of the past and focus on making improvements in the future. We need to continue addressing aboriginal issues because it's the right thing to do.

Given the state of the global economy, addressing such apparent and pressing issues affecting aboriginal people has now become an economic and social imperative. Ontario needs to be at our best if we're going to compete in the global economy. Aboriginal people, particularly aboriginal youth, are the fastest-growing segment of our population. They are our future.

Aboriginal people have demonstrated remarkable resilience, knowledge and expertise throughout the ages. This combination of indigenous knowledge, experience and foresight will continue to bring us valuable ideas,

helping to build our economies throughout Canada now and in the future. Stronger aboriginal communities mean a stronger Ontario and a stronger Canada.

This new aboriginal affairs working group and new FPTA process can be a tangible means of addressing the socio-economic gap, improving social conditions and enabling sustainable economies for aboriginal people in this province.

Again, I welcome my counterparts from the provinces and territories, my federal counterpart and the leaders of the five national aboriginal organizations. I look forward to a productive meeting tomorrow and a first step toward a better future for aboriginal people and all Canadians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to respond to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and his statement today regarding the upcoming aboriginal affairs ministers' meeting on aboriginal education and economic development, which I understand takes place tomorrow downtown, at the Delta Chelsea Hotel.

At long last, on October 20, I was fortunate to finally have a briefing which I'd requested from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs some weeks before, and I want to thank the ministry staff for this opportunity. Their presentation was professional and the information that they provided me was detailed and comprehensive, and I want to express my appreciation to the staff at the ministry for the good work that they do.

Basic demographics tell us that education and economic development are both critically important. Ontario is home to more than 242,000 aboriginal Canadians, the largest number in Canada. The aboriginal population is young, with over 26% being 15 years of age or younger.

It's worthwhile to point out that our aboriginal population is growing. Between 2001 and 2006, it has grown at rates ranging from 20% for the First Nation population to 52% for the Metis population, and that's significant. Aboriginal Canadians have so much to contribute to our country, and we need their talents, skill and culture. A young and growing population will require the best possible education and economic development to sustain jobs, which in far too many aboriginal communities remain far too few.

After six years in power, these communities have heard a great many promises from the McGuinty Liberal government. Unfortunately, however, they have seen very little action and very few tangible results to improve their quality of life—which brings us to the purpose of the ministers' meeting.

According to the minister's website, the purpose of the working group is to "examine how to work more effectively with the federal government to improve outcomes for aboriginal people." Of course, we hope that this group succeeds and that meaningful progress is achieved. But in terms of education and economic development—the focus of the ministers' meeting—the McGuinty government has fallen woefully short. Their record of improving outcomes has also come up short. In fact, observers both from within First Nations communities and outside

observers are saying that legislation now coming from this government is likely not to improve outcomes. In fact, it may worsen outcomes.

One example is Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, which passed third reading last week. Our caucus believes that this bill did not even include defined economic development targets to ensure that our mining industry, which is critical to First Nations communities, continues to thrive. As an aside, we see that bureaucratic red tape is alive and well in the province of Ontario. In fact, I'm told that it takes three years to open a mine in Russia but it takes nearly 12 years to open one in Ontario.

Here's what Terence Corcoran wrote in his widely read column about the McGuinty government, which he dubbed "Canada's worst government": "First is Bill 173, the Mining Amendment Act, which among other things is an attempt to bring aboriginal communities into the administration of the province's scatterbrained mining laws. Second is Bill 191, the Far North Act. It also attempts to bring aboriginal participation into decision-making over resource development of Ontario's far north. What these two bills actually do, however, is trample on everybody's property rights, from First Nation rights to the rights of cottage owners caught in the murky legislation that sets out mineral rights across the province."

He goes on to write the following: "Only about 24,000 people live in First Nation communities in Ontario's far north. One of those First Nations, the Nishnawbe Aski, declared its total opposition to Bill 191 after it was introduced last summer. Grand Chief Stan Beardy called for an immediate withdrawal of the bill. He said that the 225,000-square-kilometre conservation area, established without consultation or consent, will prevent his people 'from achieving economic independence by preventing development needed to build our communities and strengthen the Ontario economy.'"

I think it's obvious that the McGuinty government has failed in its duty to consult First Nations and it has failed in its duty to promote the kind of economic growth and development that would yield real benefits to those communities. The government's rhetoric surrounding consultation sounds particularly hollow when it comes to its planned sales tax hike, which, if it comes into effect next year on Canada Day, would increase the cost of living for every Ontario family. Aboriginal families of course would also see their costs going up. Just this week, I received five letters from First Nations communities, all of which voice their strong opposition to this new tax, but they also express opposition to this government's approach, which has failed miserably to consult the people whose lives this new tax would affect.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wonder if this is something that I should be celebrating, first of all, as a member of this assembly and as somebody who represents a great number of First Nations. If I was to read the statement made by the minister, I would be feeling warm and fuzzy inside because it says, "We need to continue addressing

aboriginal issues because it's the right thing to do ... addressing such apparent and pressing issues affecting aboriginal people has now become an economic and social imperative," and it talks about how aboriginal people are our future. Well, you have a funny way of showing it, because as I look in communities in my riding and as I look at communities inside the various ridings of the province of Ontario, I ask myself a very simple question: Are First Nations community residents any better off today than they were six years ago? And the answer is, absolutely not.

Do we still have 20 people living in a house? Yes. Are people in a situation where they can't study when they go to school because there's so much dysfunctionality in a house with 20 people that they're not able to even graduate from grade 6 or grade 7? Do we still have communities that have a lack of policing? Absolutely.

1530

Community after community has come before the minister of corrections and security and has said, "We need you to take a leadership role in this province and to increase the funding to Nishnawbe-Aski policing in order to provide basic policing services inside our communities." If you called NAPS in Attawapiskat or in Peawanuck or in Big Trout Lake, often there is nobody there to respond to the call. Is that because the police don't want to come? Absolutely not. It's because they don't have the resources to do it. Nishnawbe-Aski policing, along with the Nishnawbe-Aski Nation, have come before this government—I was at those meetings—and said, "Listen, it's very simple. There is an agreement. It's called the '68 agreement." In the '68 agreement, it says that if the province of Ontario was to increase the funding to a program that it is jointly responsible for the funding of, the federal government has to do the same.

So we went to the provincial government, we went to Minister Bartolucci and said that there is currently a \$20-million underfunding—\$24 million, to be exact—of Nishnawbe-Aski policing in northwestern and northeastern Ontario to be able to provide really basic things, like a vehicle they can drive to a call with, a radio system so they can answer the call, a phone system so they can pick up the phone, police officers so somebody is there to answer the call, just basic things. We're not talking about forensics. We're not talking about highfalutin technology. We're just talking about putting boots on the ground. And what did we get from the minister? Mr. Bartolucci said, "I feel your pain. Oh, my God, I'm with you. We are going to struggle, we're going to fight on behalf of First Nations and we're going to do everything that's necessary to lobby the federal government to increase its share."

Well, where's Ontario? You know, I look at the province of Ontario and I look at the map, and the last time I looked at it, Nishnawbe-Aski territory is in the province of Ontario. People who live in Attawapiskat or Big Trout Lake are residents of the province of Ontario as well, and we have a shared responsibility to provide basic services. Can you imagine in the city of Timmins if residents in

that community couldn't get somebody at the end of the phone when they called 911? Or if the police were asked to be dispatched and they didn't have a car to put the police officer in to go and answer the call? Can you imagine what people in that community would be saying? Can you imagine what we would all be saying? Government members and opposition members, we'd be finding a solution. But because these communities are far away, landlocked, no roads, fly-in communities, we say, "Oh, well, it's a federal responsibility."

Are we any further when it comes to the issue of housing? We had an agreement to build a new community in Kashechewan, and as a result of the games played, mostly by the federal government—I'll give you some credit—and the province's lack of leadership, we're no further ahead today than we were six or seven years ago. We have children who go to school in Attawapiskat in portable classrooms. We don't allow that to happen in any other community in Ontario. But what's worse is, the portable classrooms are contaminated by way of diesel. Does the province say, "Oh, my God, these children are important. They are our future. It is an economic and social imperative"? Absolutely not. They say, "Go talk to the federal government." So the kids of Attawapiskat have been without a school for an entire generation. I fear that at the speed we're going, it will be a second generation before we actually have a solution.

Is it just Attawapiskat? Go a little further north and talk to the kids in Fort Severn. Find out what they're going through in the community of Fort Severn, where their school has been closed because of mould contamination.

So you can use all the words you want, Minister—and I have great respect for you; I don't mean this personally—but I represent the people of Timmins-James Bay, and from the vantage point where I sit, when I see ministers say, "They are our future, our economic and social imperative, and it's the right thing to do," I'm looking for actions, not just words.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is now time for—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I didn't have an opportunity earlier, but I'd like to welcome both Tim Perron and Anne Marie Vaillancourt, realtors from the city of Timmins who are here with us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mrs. Julia Munro: "Whereas the McGuinty government's plan to 'harmonize' the PST and the GST will result in Ontario taxpayers paying 8% more for a multitude of products and services;

"Whereas the 8% tax increase will increase the cost of services such as housing and real estate services, gasoline, hydro bills, home heating fuel, Internet and cable bills, haircuts, gym memberships, legal services, construction and renovation, car repairs, plumbing and electrical services, landscaping services, leisure activities, hotel rooms, veterinary services for the family pet and even funeral services; and

"Whereas Ontario taxpayers cannot afford this tax grab—particularly in the middle of a recession;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to direct the government of Ontario to abandon the sales tax increase announced in the 2009 budget."

I'm pleased to affix my signature to this and give it to page Matthew.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I want to thank one person in particular for having gathered the signatures. Thirty years ago, I won my one and only hockey championship on a team on which a gentleman named Glenn Ursulak played in front of me. He's one of the guys who gathered the signatures and signed this one. Hi, Glenn. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could" better "be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to add my signature in support of those on the petition and to ask page Kira to carry it for me.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

This petition is signed by a great number of my constituents, primarily from the great town of Tillsonburg. On their behalf, I'm pleased to be able to present this petition to you, Mr. Speaker.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I present a petition that reads as follows:

"We, the undersigned residents of Ontario, petition the Parliament of Ontario to prevent the windup of Nortel pensions under the current regulations administered by the Financial Services Commission of Ontario. To be forced into annuities at this time is the worst possible outcome under current market conditions.

"Since Nortel fulfilled its responsibility under the pension benefits guarantee fund, we are asking the province to honour its responsibility and protect Nortel pensions accordingly.

"We need our government fighting on our behalf in the bankruptcy court. We need change in provincial and federal laws which are unfair and outdated. They are in conflict with one another and allow failing companies like Nortel to deny pensions and benefits to pensioners, terminated and long-term disabled employees.

"Our government must convene a national summit on pensions and improve the Canada pension plan benefits and make it mandatory. All provincial governments must take action now."

I agree with this petition. I sign my name and give it to page Henry for submission.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and read a petition on behalf of Ontarians from the Barrie region.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

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"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the re-

location of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

I agree with this petition and sign it.

TAXATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke do not want the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline, for their hydro, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I support this petition, affix my name to it and send it down with page Emma.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I want to say that it was a pleasure to hear the good member from Oxford read a similar petition here this afternoon. I have one that reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition provided to me by W.T. Isaacs of Brantford and Forbes Insurance of Cambridge, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the biggest tax hike in Ontario's history, but he still cuts health care services and nurses; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010 with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; arena ice and soccer field rentals; Internet fees; theatre admissions; funerals; courier fees; fast food sold for under \$4; bus fares; golf green fees; gym fees; snowplowing; bicycles; taxi fares; train fares; domestic air travel; accountant services and real estate commissions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I definitely want to thank Sean Travis of Sir Lou Drive in Brampton, who represents Brampton Caledon Community Living, who delivered me this petition. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006....; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

"That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-

growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

I agree with this petition. I am pleased to sign it and to ask page Rebecca to carry it for me.

SALES OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition that was given to me by the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association. There are more than 900 signatures on it. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

"Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

"Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

"Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of 'if' but 'when';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now."

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: Before presenting this petition I would like to thank Marjorie Stewart of the Ontario Genealogical Society for her work in getting petitions to me on this subject. The petition reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

Again, as I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from the riding of Durham. It's more specifically from

Zephyr: Paul Thompson and others from that small community. It reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and endorse this and present it to Kira, one of the many pages here.

SALES OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I am reading this petition on behalf of the Ontario Convenience Store Association.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

"Whereas other provinces ... have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

"Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

"Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

"Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of 'if' but 'when';

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province ... now."

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I want to take this opportunity to recognize a constituent of mine, my father, who is celebrating his 79th birthday today. I just wanted to recognize that and put it on the record.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The honourable member knows that is not a point of order, but we do wish your father a happy 79th birthday.

1550

OPPOSITION DAY

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: I move that the Legislative Assembly of Ontario call upon the Premier of Ontario to appoint a commission of inquiry with a mandate to identify, examine and report on:

(a) whether there was any deliberate price-fixing and bid-rigging of contracts at eHealth Ontario and the eHealth program at the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care;

(b) untendered contracts awarded by Management Board of Cabinet;

(c) whether ministry officials were ordered to obstruct the Auditor General from accessing offices and records of the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care; and

(d) whether there were affiliations between the Liberal Party of Ontario and persons involved in the eHealth scandal, including but not limited to former political staff in the offices of Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day motion number 2. Debate?

Mr. Tim Hudak: We are introducing this motion today because the public still does not have the answers they deserve on the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

Now, Dalton McGuinty may be feeling he has moved this off the headlines in the last couple of days. Certainly, following up a billion-dollar scandal with a \$25-billion deficit could accomplish that task. Perhaps this is the kind of damage control we could expect from Canada's worst government: If you demonstrate enough fiscal incompetence, people will only talk about that and hopefully forget about the growing second-term rot spreading across the McGuinty government.

But we're not going to let them get away with that, and Ontario families are not going to let Dalton McGuinty get away with that. Ontario families are working harder, they're paying more in taxes, their hydro fees are going up, their auto insurance rates are going up, their tuition is going up and utility costs are going up: all of this just to stand still, all of this just to tread water. To see a billion dollars of taxpayer revenue get flushed down the drain and Liberal-friendly consultants get fat and rich on untendered contracts rightfully makes Ontario taxpayers outraged, and they want answers today.

While the Auditor General's work has been helpful in shedding some early light on this appalling waste of taxpayer dollars, the full extent and depth of the rot has yet to be determined. And while one of Dalton McGuinty's senior ministers finally did the right thing and resigned for his role in this sordid affair, the people behind this scandal have not yet all been held to account—not by a long shot.

An auditor's report and a token resignation do not close the books on this sorry affair. There are other senior

cabinet ministers implicated in the auditor's report, including the Deputy Premier and former health minister, George Smitherman, who presided over the growing culture of entitlement and spending abuses behind this scandal. If the consequence for a health minister, David Caplan, who wasted \$240 million, was to lose his job, then the former minister, George Smitherman, who wasted \$837 million, should suffer the same fate and should be stepping down immediately.

Sadly, Mr. McCarter lacked the mandate or the resources necessary to answer many of the most important unanswered questions that remain about Dalton McGuinty's eHealth boondoggle. Let me give you some examples. Were activities such as bid-rigging taking place that would warrant a criminal investigation? Who ordered government officials to block the Auditor General from his job in investigating this eHealth mess? What was the full role of the powerful Management Board of Cabinet and, in particular, Deputy Premier George Smitherman, who presided over the growing eHealth debacle for five straight years? And what are the full identities and possible Liberal affiliations of the people who got rich off the misuse of taxpayer dollars?

Ontario families are demanding answers to these questions. They want to know who is going to pay the consequences for those misdeeds, and they darned well want to know if Dalton McGuinty is going to try to get their money back from the consultants who fleeced the taxpayers in this province.

With today's motion, the Ontario PC caucus continues its call for a full public inquiry to get to the bottom of this scandal, to get answers to those questions that remain about the serious and potentially criminal abuses of taxpayer dollars that occurred at eHealth under Dalton McGuinty's watch, under George Smitherman's watch, under David Caplan's watch.

We deserve to know who broke the rules, who got rich and who in the McGuinty government was involved. And the only way the people of Ontario will get those answers they need is a full public inquiry, similar to the Gomery commission, which exposed the worst abuses of the federal Liberal sponsorship scandal to the full light of day.

Let's put this into perspective. A billion dollars went to waste due to the eHealth boondoggle. The entire cost of the sponsorship scandal in Ottawa: \$100 million—money that was earmarked for advertising; the eHealth money earmarked for health care in the province of Ontario—10 times the cost of the Adscam.

Today, hospitals throughout the province are being forced to stretch their health care dollars and debate service cuts or staff reductions. They could have used some of that billion dollars that went to line the pockets of Liberal-friendly consultants, sadly, instead. In my own riding, construction of the new West Lincoln Memorial Hospital has been delayed indefinitely. Other hospitals face similar dilemmas province-wide, such as Douglas Memorial Hospital in Fort Erie or Port Colborne General Hospital that have seen their 24-hour ERs shut down and

surgery taken from their hospitals by a Premier who increased taxes he said were for health care and now is closing down services in these very same hospitals.

What are the patients and families who depend on these facilities to think when they see hundreds of millions of dollars blown on Liberal-friendly consultants while pediatric and maternity wards are forced to close? Family health care should not have to take a back seat to Liberal insiders and to sweetheart deals. Sadly, that is exactly the example the Premier is setting as he continues to railroad our call for an impartial, arm's-length and thorough investigation.

Ontario families are already forced to work harder. They work longer hours away from home just to make ends meet. They're forced to pay higher taxes and higher fees, but are seeing little if any benefit in return from this government. They deserve to see value for the dollars that they do pay, and they better get some answers to why this money got flushed down the drain with nothing to show for it for Ontario families.

Hard-working Ontario families deserve an answer; they deserve an answer immediately. That's why I respectfully encourage the Liberal MPPs in this House to support the opposition call for a full public inquiry. If nothing else, the full inquiry will remove all doubt about who was involved in the scandal and those who profited from it. And if you believe there's nothing left to hide following the Auditor General's investigation, then we should proceed with the inquiry to help restore Ontario families' faith that tax dollars are being spent carefully and responsibly. I would also call on their constituents to not let them get away with simply following Dalton McGuinty's directions on this one.

These Liberal MPPs were also elected to represent their constituents, not Dalton McGuinty and not George Smitherman. Liberal MPPs can do the right thing today simply by voting in favour of our motion later this afternoon.

I'd say to my colleagues across this House, it's not too late. Let's do the right thing. Let's show some real responsibility for a change. Let's protect the public's right to know and get answers to exactly what happened with this \$1-billion boondoggle and get some of that money back to put into health care today.

1600

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my pleasure to speak to this today. The opposition party is being disingenuous in this request, this motion for a public inquiry. Let's go back to what our very distinguished—

Mr. Ted Arnott: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: Can I ask you to rule whether or not the member for Willowdale has used unparliamentary language?

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): By not standing or correcting him, I have ruled. The member for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: Thank you, Speaker. Our very distinguished, capable, competent and ever-vigilant Auditor

General has rendered a great service to this matter of the eHealth records.

The Premier, the minister and our government, when this issue broke, specifically asked the Auditor General to look into the matter of eHealth records.

I can tell you that a number of us in this chamber sit on the public accounts committee. I can tell you, as will, I expect, the Conservative Chair of the public accounts committee, the five Liberal members, the Conservative members and the NDP member—they will all attest to the vigour and the competence of our Auditor General. He went in there at the specific direction of this government to investigate the accounts at eHealth, and after he spent considerable time there, along with his team of very skilled and, in my view, hawk-eyed auditors, this is the conclusion that the Auditor General reached: He said, and this is very, very important, “We were aware”—and by the “we” he means himself and the staff of the Auditor General—“of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.”

This is not just in the auditor’s own work. He uses the expression “our work”; that is, his team of professional auditors who have great experience in reviewing the accounts of the government, as will all members of the public accounts committee and especially the Conservative Chair of the public accounts committee.

So now we have an Auditor General, a professional Auditor General, whose position as Auditor General has been renewed from time to time by this Legislature because this Legislature has great confidence in the Auditor General. The Auditor General went into that exercise with a thought in his mind: He had been made aware of allegations that party politics may have entered into the awarding of contracts. And with that thought planted in his mind, it’s inconceivable that an auditor of that skill, of that competence, of that commitment to the integrity of the position of Auditor General was not ever-vigilant himself, and his team, when they conducted their audit.

Having brought that vigilance to the exercise, having brought that competence to the exercise, having brought that spirit of good government to that exercise, what did the Auditor General find after his team’s audit? What did he find with respect to this allegation of party politics that he had been made aware of? Again, in closing, I repeat the Auditor General’s report at page 11. It’s interesting that that quote appears at page 11, right at the start of the auditor’s report. It’s not some passing comment that he made in the depths of page 300 of the report. It’s an issue that he faced right up front at page 11. It’s an issue that was in his mind. His conclusion, and I repeat: “We were aware of the allegations that ‘party politics’ may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work.”

It begs the question: What is the intention of this opposition motion? The intention of the opposition motion is merely to play politics with an issue that we ought not to be playing politics with. Let’s move ahead on the eHealth file.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: The opposition has moved a very broad resolution today addressing the eHealth situation, and I want to take a few minutes just to talk about the sorts of things that the public has been made aware of in the last while. The problems at eHealth—really, the big numbers caught the public’s attention, but there are small numbers as well that talk to people about the contempt with which the whole process was managed: the expensing of tea at Tim Hortons for \$1.65, referred to previously in this House; \$3.99 for Choco Bites; \$30 for a carwash; child care expenses.

Then we heard about the \$3,000-a-day fees, the speech that cost \$25,000. After that, we heard about the \$317,000 severance package to eHealth’s CEO.

The auditor revealed a lot of troubling details about the issue that’s before us: 300 consultants, outnumbering 30 ministry staff; the number of consultants going from one in 2002-03 to 328 in 2008-09, with a 10,000% increase in the value of consultants’ contracts; consultants on the payroll for six years. Consultants? Temporary staff? Six years? After six months or a year, you start looking at whether or not this is a permanent position—six years at premium pay.

A consultant who awarded consulting contracts worth over \$1.3 million to a company he was associated with; the sole-sourced hiring of a consultant firm to help hire 15 senior management positions; millions of dollars paid in untendered consultant contracts, with little to show for it; a rigged bidding system; favouritism in awarding contracts. In one bid, senior management awarded a bid to a consultant whose bid was five times that of the next competitor and significantly higher than the budget allowed.

A revolving door between work at the ministry and work as a high-priced consultant; a ministry under two ministers who completely failed to oversee eHealth; a board that may have been hesitant to watch over the CEO because she was hand-picked by the Premier; Ontario at the back of the pack when it comes to electronic health records.

As the Auditor General said, “The value of this investment ... has not been realized.” Ontarians expect more from their government and their health care dollars. They want real accountability. What they got was a government more interested in rewarding consultant insiders with lucrative contracts.

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The Auditor General has much to do. Last week, the NDP was able to get through the public accounts committee a motion to have the auditor review the use of consultants by the Ministry of Health, the LHINs and hospitals. The Ministry of Health spends \$100 million on

consultants. That excludes spending by LHINs and hospitals. The government spends more than \$1 million a day on consultants, a figure that excludes transfer payment recipients. The Ministry of Health failed to oversee eHealth's use of consultants. How could Ontarians know that the ministry is doing a better job with consultants than the eHealth board did?

In the last few months, we've heard more troubling details about the use of consultants across the health sector. On the same day that the Auditor General's report was released, an internal government audit of Cancer Care Ontario was released. The audit was requested only after it was revealed that \$75 million had been spent on consultants over a two-year period: \$30 million to three consultancies, \$19 million in untendered contracts with the Courtyard Group and expenses without documentation.

Meanwhile, a scandal is brewing at the London Health Sciences Centre: \$3.3 million in contracts were awarded to the Atwood Group, an IT consultant, without competitive bidding. The owner of the consultancy, Tom Vlasic, charged \$1,350 to \$1,500 per day. Diane Beattie, a vice-president at the hospital, awarded the contract. Ms. Beattie was a long-time colleague of Vlasic. Ms. Beattie resigned in late September. She received a severance package of almost half a million dollars.

Over the summer, very disturbing facts were brought to light by the Chatham media. The Erie St. Clair LHIN was looking to close Wallaceburg's Sydenham hospital; the LHIN has already shut down the hospital's medical-surgical beds. Wallaceburg activists are fighting to save the hospital, and have formed the Save Our Sydenham Committee. In an e-mail discovered by the Chatham-Kent Daily Post, the Chatham-Kent hospital hired Veritas Communications, a consultant, to dig up dirt on the chair of the Save Our Sydenham Committee: our tax dollars at work undermining a citizens' group that was, in fact, trying to protect health care services.

These details speak to the need for the auditor to look at consulting contracts beyond eHealth. We look forward to the auditor's reviews of LHINs, hospitals and the ministry itself.

Ontario's attempt to build an electronic health system has soared in cost to more than \$1 billion, and that's a lot of money. But this is only a small part of an even larger story. It doesn't tell us about the waste that has occurred because of years of stalled work. It doesn't explain the costs, both financial and human, to Ontario's patients of the inefficiencies of our system.

This \$1 billion may have been money well spent if we had a system to show for it, but we don't. If you could walk in to your physician's office and see the record from your recent visit to a walk-in clinic, if your physician could forward your health information to the hospital where your specialist is working, all of that would be very useful. Unfortunately, none of this is possible today, in spite of the \$1-billion investment. Instead, Ontario's patients remain sorely underserved when it comes to electronic health records. Not only do

we have nothing to show for all this money, but we're also pouring good money down the drain as our need for these funds grows.

New Democrats have a lot of ideas about how to spend \$1 billion on actually delivering services. My guess is that people across Ontario could think of good uses for \$1 billion. The sad reality is that our health care system is under increasing strain. Hospitals are facing soaring deficits that have forced them to cut costs even when it is care that suffers. We have witnessed loss of emergency rooms, maternity wards and physiotherapy services. As emergency rooms close in these small communities, like what happened in Fort Erie at the Douglas Memorial Hospital, it's hospitals in the larger centres that are increasingly straining under the weight, hospitals like those in Niagara Falls, which are now serving patients in the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie because there are no services for them at home. Since the Port Colborne emergency room closed down, the Welland Hospital has faced a 20% increase in patients. But these aren't the only communities that have been losing services. This is happening across the province.

The Minister of Health may attempt to hide from the realities faced in these communities, but residents know the truth. They're looking at looming cuts. As an example, cuts in the Soo: 125 renal dialysis patients were discharged because of cuts to the dialysis clinic; five surgical beds closed; 12 RN positions to be eliminated by spring 2010 at the Sault Area Hospital. At Burk's Falls, the urgent care centre has been closed. There are another 28 beds across Muskoka, Bracebridge and Huntsville areas on the chopping block. Burk's Falls is planning to close all of their acute-care beds; there are currently seven.

Sudbury: Sudbury Regional Hospital is poised to cut 37 RN positions because of a \$12-million deficit. And I have to say to you, having talked to people in Sudbury, there's already huge pressure on the Sudbury regional health system because of the needs in outlying areas. Further reductions in health care support are not reasonable, not justifiable and not acceptable.

In Windsor's Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital, the neonatal intensive care unit has experienced service reduction. There have been cuts to respiratory therapy. They've cut the pain clinic. Other beds and service cuts have followed. But now at least they have a balanced hospital budget, after removing significant and important services to the public.

Guelph General Hospital closed its pain clinic and cut 30 staff and 16 beds.

In Kitchener, St. Mary's General Hospital closed inpatient rehabilitation beds, and they recently lost their outpatient physiotherapy clinic.

In Kingston: huge hospital deficits—around \$14 million—and the loss of 157 full-time positions. Closure of 20 beds is planned.

One could go on for a very long time. One could go on for the full 40 minutes and then some. But the reality is that even when you go through all those details, all the

details that are publicly available, we know that there's a lot more to find, that the situation we find at the moment is not transparent, and that in fact we need oversight, an assessment of what's being done with our precious health care dollars.

We hope today that there will be a full examination of the eHealth scandal that flows out of today's debate. Ontarians are tired of the games they've been subjected to. They want answers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just to let you know, I will not be supporting the need for a public inquiry. This isn't because we don't agree that there have been some serious problems at eHealth and its predecessor agencies. Clearly, their practices around procurement and sole-source consulting were just simply not acceptable. Because they were not acceptable, we have accepted the recommendations from the Auditor General's report. We have changed sole-sourcing requirements, or at least said, "You can't sole-source." We have changed expensing, expense rules and salary disclosure rules.

So, yes, there is a problem. We recognize there has been a problem. We have been dealing with fixing the problem.

However, part of that, getting to the root of it, is asking the Auditor General to do a report. The Auditor General was working with the federal Auditor General to look at the whole area of eHealth records. The Minister of Health at the time asked the Auditor General to look at it, and the Standing Committee on Public Accounts asked the Auditor General to look at it. As a result of that, he did in fact table an extremely thorough report. We have the report and we've been looking at it in public accounts.

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One of the things that I found really interesting was being able to sort out in fact where the money had been spent, because there has been a lot of implication that this \$1 billion was misspent at eHealth Ontario. In fact, what the auditor identifies when he looks at the figures, where that \$1 billion comes from, is an effort that started back in 2002 with something called Smart Systems for Health that was actually set up by the Conservative government of the day, in co-operation with the federal government. I'm not criticizing them for setting this up. Smart Systems for Health actually spent \$817 million of the money in question. The Ministry of Health spent the bulk of the rest of the money working on applications. In fact, at the time the auditor was looking at the up-to-date figures, or at least the figures that he had up to the end of 2008-09, eHealth had only spent \$20 million of that. So there's a total misconception about where the money was spent.

But what's also interesting is whether we got anything for that money, because the headlines have indicated, and certainly the opposition has fed into that, that somehow this whole \$1 billion was wasted and we didn't get anything for it.

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, the auditor did not say—

Interjection.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: No, the auditor did not say that.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Oxford.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Let me tell you what the auditor actually said instead of us standing here arguing about it, because I was at his press conference; I've been there at public accounts. So I asked him, "Was there \$1 billion wasted? Because that isn't what I heard you say, Auditor." The auditor went on to say, "Yes. I think what I said was that in our opinion, we didn't get full value for money for the \$1 billion." We all agree on that. "I have seen that headline as well: 'Auditor Says \$1 Billion Was Wasted.' That would be going too far. We basically felt that there is some value that is going to be realized from some of that money, certainly on the infrastructure side"—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: —with the \$800-million eHealth highway, and that the applications were useful.

I want to give you a really quick example of something that worked. In my community, the eHealth highway matters, because for the rural areas there is no high-speed Internet, so getting that electronic highway in place mattered. Once that happened, one of the first applications was the diagnostic imaging application. Up to that time, if you went to a hospital in Wellington county, you might be able to get an X-ray, and a simple fracture could be read by the doc on call, but if you had a more complicated issue, either the X-ray film had to go to Guelph to be read or the patient had to go to Guelph, because there was no capacity. As soon as this system came into place, they started to do the X-rays in the rural hospital, transmit them digitally to Guelph, and have them read in Guelph by the Guelph radiologist.

In fact, in a week or so we're having the opening of a CT scanner in Fergus, and it's because of eHealth. They can do the CT in Fergus and it can be digitally transmitted to the radiologist in Guelph. That's eHealth at work for patients in Ontario.

So what do these folks over here want to know? What they want to know is, was the money wasted? The auditor says we didn't get full value for money, but we did get some good stuff.

Was there party politics? Well, let me tell you what the auditor said about that. He said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work." They knew that was the allegation, but "we saw no evidence of this."

Interjection: What's the page number?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Page 11. "Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding some of these contracts are ... true." So he did say there was favour-

itism. "In our opinion, the CEO's"—and he's talking about Kramer, the CEO of eHealth—"prior relationships with a number of the firms and individuals were one of the factors in her hiring and procurement decisions, and this does constitute favouritism."

We know the answer: It wasn't political; it was personal favouritism.

Well, then the opposition says, "We have to get to the bottom of this. It's illegal." The auditor has said quite clearly there is no evidence of anything illegal. "I have no information"—

Interjections.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Yes, he did. He said that he had seen no evidence that—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Guelph, just a moment. Earlier in the debate there was attention paid to those who had the floor. That seems to be waning a bit, and I don't want to see it get any worse. The member for Guelph.

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Just let me wrap up by saying that we have a report. The Leader of the Opposition asked for answers. There are 50 pages of answers in this report. The problem the opposition has is that they don't like the answers. We don't need another report; we need to pay attention to the Auditor General.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to support this motion by our leader, Tim Hudak, in order to bring this government to account.

It's interesting, in the course of questioning over the last few weeks, it has been clear that Premier McGuinty, when he was in opposition, called for a public inquiry almost daily when he thought there was something the government was not disclosing to the opposition. In fact, our research shows that he asked for it even more often than Mr. Hudak asked in his questions last week. In fact, the story goes that one day, while he was having a snooze in here, somebody bumped into his chair—

Mr. Robert Bailey: You're kidding.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Yes, and Dalton woke up and said, "I demand a public inquiry." Those were the first words he uttered as he arose from his slumber because he was so conditioned to demanding a public inquiry on a daily basis in this chamber when he was in opposition. In fact, he also complimented the famous Mr. Dithers, Paul Martin, then Prime Minister of Canada, for calling the Gomery inquiry, and that was about \$100 million, \$150 million; this is \$1 billion. The people of Ontario want to know where their money went. This is not us; this is the people of Ontario, who want to know what happened to the \$1 billion at eHealth.

It is interesting that the member for Guelph wants to get into the words of the Auditor General, but they only want to quote the words that they want. I've also seen the transcripts from the hearings with the Auditor General. He goes into the several hundred millions of dollars when he talks about the money that has been misspent at eHealth, but he also talks about the fact that the scope

and ability of his mandate to go beyond the curtain, so to speak, is limited, if it's there at all. He can only follow the paper that he is given by the government.

When you start to see things coming up every day that show that there was a concerted effort to deny the public the information that they have the right to, then the only way we can get at that truth is through a public inquiry. This government refuses to grant that public inquiry, which goes against everything that they ever said when they were in opposition. There are so many unanswered questions. The Auditor General cannot ask the questions. In spite of what they want to tell you, he can't ask the questions.

There's a great deal of difference in the way the federal government operates with regard to committee and the way the province operates. In the committee structure in the federal government, the opposition controls the majority on the committee; in the province, it is dominated by the government. In the federal Parliament, they can call and subpoena witnesses; in our system, we can't. We asked for that. In a motion today in the public accounts committee, when it was put to the committee to call Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson, two people who used to be a part of this mess and who might be able to shed some light on to it, Ms. Sandals, Mr. Leal, Mr. McNeely, Mr. Ramsay, and Mr. Zimmer, who spoke earlier, all voted against it. They shut down the public's right to a fair hearing and information from these key people.

1630

It is interesting that a couple of weeks ago, when we had an opposition day motion to open up the committee, Mr. Zimmer seemed to think that that was exactly what the committee was going to do: "The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General reports. That report is going to be available next week and, as with previous hearings in the past, the committee will hear from witnesses," only the witnesses that this Liberal government, this Liberal Party and the Liberal Premier, who is hiding, want to hear from. The people whom the people of Ontario want to hear from, who can shed light on this scandal of \$1 billion of their money, are being denied access to that committee. The people of Ontario and those listening have to understand that the only way we can bring people before the committee is to allow the subcommittee on the committee to change the rules by which they bring in witnesses; otherwise, we on the committee are powerless. The opposition does not have enough votes. It's a skewed system.

It's totally wrong that this government has the majority on the only committee that can hold their feet to the fire and bring them to public account on this issue, but the opposition is neutered. The members of this government, the trained seals who do whatever the Premier tells them to do, go into those committee meetings and just nod, "Yes, sir, yes, sir, three bags full; whatever the Premier's office wants us to do." You see, there are two kinds of people on the government side. There are those who sit in cabinet and have the fancy limousine and want

to keep it, and there are those who want to be in cabinet and get that fancy limousine, and either one of them is only ever going to achieve that goal if they do whatever Dalton McGuinty tells them to do.

Now, there are a couple of people who are exempt from that. One of them is George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure. But you see, he was the Minister of Health when \$837 million of the \$1 billion was spent, and yet he still sits—he's quiet these days, though, have you noticed? I don't think he wants to upset the people in Toronto. He wants to stay kind of under the radar, or maybe like he is in a tunnel to the island airport. No, he'd be against that, like David Miller.

I'm going to pass this on to some of my other colleagues, but this party is incensed that they have taken advantage of every opportunity to block the people's right to the facts and the truth, and put the opposition in a position where we cannot exercise democracy in this House. It's a shame. Something should be changed, and what could start it is that these people could stand up and say, "Do you know what? It's \$1 billion, it's taxpayers' money and we have every responsibility to get to the truth, even if it points some fingers back at our Liberal friends."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand in my place and speak on the motion on eHealth brought by the opposition leader. I was listening to my friend opposite speak for quite some time. He was talking about eHealth and many different issues. I know this issue is very complex and has been addressed a long time ago, in 2000, when the federal government and all the provinces and territories came together to establish electronic health records to save the health care budget around the nation more than \$6 billion on a yearly basis. Since that time, many different governments came and tried to address this issue.

This issue is very complex. I was reading the report of the Auditor General. I was shocked when I learned how many procedures: 2,000 health care transactions every minute in Canada, 1 billion transactions each year, including 440 million laboratory tests, 382 million drug prescriptions, 332 million visits to physicians, 35 million diagnostic images and 2.58 million in-patient hospitalizations. So this is a very complex issue, and so many people enter this domain. That's why the complexity came, because we need a lot of technology to warehouse and transfer all of this information.

I know that our government committed to this cause, and since we came to office, we've been trying to work hard to establish electronic health records because it's good for the people of Ontario, good for the patients of Ontario, good for the taxpayers.

Then, when the whole issue about eHealth erupted, due to transparency and due to respect for the people of Ontario, our Premier Dalton McGuinty called the Auditor General and asked him to conduct a report about this issue. As a result of that, he came out with his report;

everybody knows about the report that came out not too long ago from the Auditor General.

As a government, we believe strongly in accountability and transparency. We accept all these recommendations and we're trying, as we are in office, to implement them step by step because I think we owe respect to the people of Ontario who gave us the chance and the honour to serve on their behalf, to manage health care, education and many different issues in the province of Ontario.

The honourable members across the way are talking about accountability. If we were running away from accountability, we wouldn't have called the Auditor General to open our books. Our books are open on a regular basis to any audit because we believe the taxpayers have a right to know what's going on in every ministry, in every issue in the province of Ontario.

As you know, when we work in this area, as I mentioned, it's very complex, with many millions of transactions. It's a huge ministry with about 4,000 employees. We serve many, many patients across the province of Ontario, many doctors, many hospitals—this is very complex. That's why—as the Auditor General mentioned many, many times, no money was missing or stolen. The whole issue is oversight by the Minister of Health. That's why the Minister of Health took full responsibility and resigned, because we believe strongly in our responsibility for whatever actions happen under our mandate.

I think there's no need for an inquiry because an inquiry's going to cost a lot of money and take a lot of time, since the Auditor General came with a detailed report outlining every step of the way, since the year 2000 until today, how the money has been spent and how many transactions have been done. That's why we accepted the recommendations, and we promised the people of Ontario, as a government—our Premier, our Minister of Health and all the people who serve in this government—to fully implement all recommendations, because it's in our interest as a government to protect taxpayers' money, to implement every step of the way, and we're trying to utilize every tax dollar we have to serve the people of Ontario.

As you know, we are an aging society and these days many people are getting older. That's why we require a lot of money to support our aging society. Nobody knows what's going to happen with the flu that we're facing in the province of Ontario. I learned that it's going to cost \$650 million. We never budgeted for that. This pandemic and these circumstances we're facing today, we have to be ready for them on a daily basis, to face all the circumstances that might come in the future.

That's why, by implementing the Ontario electronic health record initiative to monitor the health care system across the province of Ontario, we would be able to save lots of money because, as you know—Mr. Speaker, probably you know it. You are not from Toronto. I'm not from Toronto. If we get sick here and go to the hospital, they have to conduct all the health reviews again for us and ask us to do many different tests, which we don't

need because we've already been tested. But if we have electronic health records, the hospital we go to outside our jurisdiction will be able to tell us what's wrong with us or what test we did and what kind of complexity we have.

That's why I think it's important to continue despite all these obstacles, because we're determined as a province, as a government, to continue in that direction because it's a good thing for the people of Ontario and a good thing for the taxpayers. That's why we respect all the people who gave us the chance and the privilege to be here to act on their behalf and protect their interests, whether in health care, education, social infrastructure or social issues, because I think we have the mandate and we're going to do whatever we can to protect that right and also to serve the people of Ontario.

Again, Mr. Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand in my place and speak against this motion brought by the opposition, because it does not mean any more—what we did in terms of accountability and transparency.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

1640

Mr. Peter Shurman: I rise today to speak in support of this motion. I find it more than moderately strange that various Liberal members have gotten to the point where they're waving copies of the Auditor General's report at us and suggesting that that in itself is a fait accompli, that everything is done.

If you, like me and most members of the Legislature this week, paid any attention whatsoever to the political polls that have been published, and there have been a few of them—I ordinarily don't, but there's something I'd like to quote here from the Ipsos Reid poll on the Ontario political scene. The National Post earlier in the week, on Monday, said this: "While the poll found McGuinty has been able to mute the blame for the recent scandals, with only 35% of Ontarians pointing the finger directly at the Premier and his ministers, 58% believe the Liberal government has not done enough to 'deal with the circumstances' of the scandals." So it isn't about whether Mr. Hudak says we need an inquiry and it isn't about whether I say we need an inquiry, it's about the fact that Ontarians believe that we need an inquiry, because they, like us, don't believe that the Auditor General's report is satisfactory. And I don't believe that the Auditor General believes that he has been able to investigate to the extent that he had to.

The way that this government governs is contrary to nature. In nature, when we see something that we think needs correction, we go about the business of correcting it. Their refusal to listen to our demands for a public inquiry into the eHealth scandal is inexplicable. It is unacceptable to me, it is unacceptable to the entire opposition, and again, it is unacceptable to the people of Ontario.

Is the government's refusal to open a full inquiry into the eHealth scandal McGuinty's way of circling the wagons? Is the Premier choosing to protect his own,

rather than do what is right for Ontarians? Those are the two valid questions that this inquiry seeks to answer.

With a billion dollars of taxpayers' money squandered on a web of Liberal friends and insiders, a public inquiry is needed to answer the questions that the Auditor General could not address in the scope of his work.

I'd like to quote from page 7 of the Auditor General's report. He says, "I first wrote to the deputy minister in the late summer of 2008, advising him of this audit. I stated that the EHR was to be the subject of the audit. We had planned on starting fieldwork in the fall. As our planning proceeded, we requested access to the ministry's eHealth program branch office and working accommodations for our field auditors, as is our normal practice. Despite repeated efforts over the course of several months, we were granted neither access nor accommodations until early February 2009"—more than a veiled allusion to the fact that the work was thwarted for as long as it was possible to be thwarted by the people in the ministry who were the subject of investigations.

What was the role of cabinet ministers, including George Smitherman, who oversaw much of the waste and scandal at eHealth and even retained responsibilities for a portion of eHealth after he was shuffled? Minister Smitherman boasted he was the longest-serving health minister in the last quarter-century in the province of Ontario. Meanwhile, you throw David Caplan under the bus for taking 22% of the responsibility. The remainder was on Smitherman's watch, and he sits there and drives it.

It just goes to show you that it's never quantity in years; it's about quality of work, a concept that the Liberal government has difficulty with in other areas of governance as well, whether that's the economy or education or the environment.

"Spend a lot" is not the same as "spend well." So when you wave those copies of the Auditor General's report at us, don't expect us to buy that as the end of this. Don't expect Ontarians to buy it, either.

Inquiring minds want to know: What was the past quarter-century's longest-serving health minister doing in the five years that he spent overseeing eHealth? That's what we want to know. George Smitherman presided over 78% of the spending abuses at eHealth. That's \$837 million of taxpayer money wasted. David Caplan, as I mentioned, was there for 22% of it.

Minister Smitherman is still heading a top-tier Ontario ministry, energy and infrastructure. David Caplan took the fall for his own mistakes and his predecessor's, and he resigned. And then Captain McGuinty rearranged the deck chairs on the Titanic.

Is this the McGuinty standard? Can we expect the same value for our money when it comes to building infrastructure? Will advancement in environmental projects in this province be hampered by the types of abuses that the Auditor General uncovered at eHealth? Time will tell, but Ontario cannot afford to take that chance. That's why we need a full and a proper inquiry. We cannot afford to gamble with Ontario's future.

There's something else that I'd like to deal with before I pass the torch to another one of our speakers, and that is the issue of what happened this morning in public accounts. The member from Willowdale, a neighbouring riding to mine, had been dealing with the issue of whether or not witnesses would be called once there was an Auditor General's report to deal with. I'd like to quote from the Hansard. Prior to the issuance of the report, the member from Willowdale said, "The standing committee already plans to review eHealth when the Auditor General reports. That report is going to be available next week and, as with previous hearings in the past, the committee will hear from witnesses.... The public accounts committee will deal with the Auditor General's report in the course of its mandate. So it raises the question, then, why is the opposition party bringing this motion? What they're asking for is already going to happen."

As we now know, it didn't, because he was one of these infamous five this morning who voted down any option to hear witnesses, which was being called for by both of the opposition parties. I've got to tell you, I happen to know two people named Steve and Jane Kerper who run the Progressive Conservative riding association in Willowdale, a very well-funded, well-organized Progressive Conservative organization. I'd like to tell the member from Willowdale that we'll be watching, because in 2011 there's an election coming, and we'll be very well-organized and very happy to send the member from Willowdale back to the practice of law.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon and talk about the opposition day motion. I'm going to do it without any huffing and puffing or finger pointing. I'm going to be very calm, and I'm going to just stay with the facts and what we know.

We know this did not happen overnight. We know that what we must do is learn from the past. We know that Santayana says that if we don't learn from the past, we're condemned to repeat it. Well, I'll tell you something: We are not going to repeat the past that began under another government. This government is addressing the eHealth issue.

As a vice-principal, when students would come into my office and they had experienced trauma or difficulty in their lives, I always said to the students, "Do you know what? It's how you deal with the problem that builds character." Let me tell you something about the character of this McGuinty government. We are dealing with this problem. On October 7, the Auditor General filed a report. Immediately, the McGuinty government reacted to the report, accepted the report in its entirety and committed to implementing all of the auditor's recommendations.

The Auditor General shone a light on some significant issues, and we thank him for that. The lessons we learned through eHealth Ontario and this audit have helped us to improve procurement and expense policies across government. We have an avowed commitment to protect

taxpayers from the misuse and misappropriation of funds. We have established solid new rules and regulations that will ensure proper governance and accountability.

Our investments in electronic health records management are significant but very valuable in how they will greatly improve our health care system. They will ultimately result in better patient care, in more efficient health care services and more efficient health care delivery for all Ontarians. We remain committed to ensuring that the money that we spend on eHealth is devoted to initiatives that will strengthen and modernize the province's health care system.

I wanted to go specifically to the recommendations of the auditor. Recommendation 1 surrounds eHealth Ontario. The recommendation is that they "should develop a comprehensive strategic plan that specifically addresses the electronic health record (EHR) target, takes Ontario beyond 2012, and lays out a path for the implementation of the EHR by 2015." The auditor's recommendation says, "The plan should also address the challenge of ensuring that the disparate EHR applications are appropriately integrated and that suitable privacy controls are built into the development process."

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So what does that mean? Well, let's talk about the government's immediate response. Prior to this, in 2007, the government announced it would develop an electronic health record for all Ontarians by 2015. So that is complete. The 2009 Ontario budget also provided approximately \$2 billion over the next three years to allow the province to move ahead, of course, in a coordinated and a meaningful way.

Ontario's plan towards an electronic health record, or an EHR, has three components, and I just wanted to briefly go over those components. What I'm doing is building towards a local example and a local success story, because at the end of the day, that's what this is about. We've heard all parties say here, "That's what we're here for. We're here to represent our constituents." In my case, it's the constituents of the riding of Kitchener-Conestoga. We're here to make sure that we are delivering the best possible services in this province for our constituents—in this case, health care. So I want to highlight that with a local example.

The third part of the first recommendation:

"Ontario has directed its efforts toward all three areas. As have other jurisdictions, Ontario has decided to use a specific clinical priority—diabetes—as a focus point in the creation of an EHR. Achieving EHRs for diabetes patients will provide a foundation for achieving EHRs for patients with other chronic diseases. From there, EHRs can be extended to all Ontarians.

"The ministry recognizes that more work is required to meet the government's commitment to an EHR for all Ontarians by 2015, and will continue to work with eHealth Ontario to meet this commitment."

That said, I wanted to go to an example. Bill Davidson is the executive director of Langs Farm Village Association. Bill Davidson and I had the opportunity to serve

on the community safety and crime prevention council of Waterloo region. The example that I'm giving is exactly supporting not only the Auditor General's recommendation, but the fact that this government, the McGuinty Liberal government, is implementing this already in our communities across Ontario—and I stand here proudly to say that that's happening in my area as well.

Bill Davidson proudly represents, as the executive director, the Langs Farm Village Association, which is an association that's been around for 30 years. It started in 1978. It's serving the community and neighbourhoods, and doing great things. He draws our attention to the Ontario telehomecare phase one program, which is part of the OTN, the Ontario Telemedicine Network. It's funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-term Care eHealth liaison branch, which focuses on congestive heart failure, chronic obstructive lung disease, and has demonstrated the effectiveness of using communication technology to enable health care providers.

What eHealth and this type of communication allows is to provide education and monitoring of clients with chronic conditions. It allows and engages clients to improve their ability to self-manage—to self-manage their condition, and to do it in a way that they are still connected—to decrease the utilization of emergency room visits, and to decrease the utilization of hospital admissions and visits to medical physicians. I really want to stress that in the pilot program that's going on, there was a 72% to 74% reduction in emergency department visits, as reported by the patients themselves in this pilot.

An individual with type 2 diabetes would be given a telehomecare device that links to their phone line to monitor their condition, thereby increasing the ability of the patient to manage their care. Again, all of this is part of exactly recommendation 1 of the auditor's report. A registered nurse would also monitor the results, refer the patient to the family doctor or any other health care provider, as needed.

I want to give you an exact quote from Bill Davidson, the executive director. Bill says:

"Building on the success of the phase one program, the Lang's Farm Community Health Centre, Kitchener Downtown Community Health Centre and Woolwich Community Health Centre are hoping to adopt the methodology/model to deliver remote care and monitoring to clients with diabetes."

I thank Bill for that because what that means for all of us, and especially my riding of Kitchener-Conestoga, is that the ability to connect patients through the electronic system, the use of the technology and the ability to teach patients to self-monitor is really moving along the road that we need to continue to move along in order to provide all Ontarians with the support and the health care that they not only need but that they deserve.

Finally, I thought that it would be worth looking at some things that are already happening, some successes that we are already experiencing. More than a million children have electronic health records, and I'm not sure that a lot of people in the province really understand that.

More than a million children already have electronic health records. Since 2005, more than four million Ontarians are already participating in the electronic medical records program, run in partnership between the province and the OMA, the Ontario Medical Association. Since 2008, 80,000 Ontarians are in a pilot project for ePrescribing, which, at the end of the day, is saving lives.

So I think it's important that we stop finger-pointing, that we accept that a lot is being done. The auditor has delivered a top-notch report. We have accepted all aspects of the report and the recommendations. This government has already been moving forward on initiatives that I highlight here, great things happening in the province. Those people who are pointing fingers and huffing and puffing really need to go back and take another look at the great things, these statistics that are happening across the province, the patients' lives that are being saved. Let's never lose sight of that fact. Whether they're in a rural area in Ontario, whether they live in an urban centre, this electronic health record system—it's filmless in hospitals; it needs to be done. We are getting through this, and at the end of the day it's what right for all Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to stand on the opposition day motion that our leader, Tim Hudak, moved, trying to bring some accountability to the Auditor General's report but more specifically, the scandalous spending, much of it unaccountable in eHealth, and arguably in other areas as well.

I guess it comes down fundamentally to a matter of trust of a government that seems to be operating from one side of the spectrum to the other, and even to the extent of the scandalous level of spending that's going on not just in the obvious areas where the auditor has most recently said there was \$1 billion spent. I really feel that the important part is to look at what other third parties are saying.

If you look recently at the articles in the Toronto media, starting with one here—it's October 17, and it reads:

"Canada's Worst Government," and it goes on to state how this government's matter of trust, the Liberal government says—I'm reading here—"The Liberal regime of Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty, now slipping into deep deficits that are likely to exceed \$30 billion ... and ... into the future, has hit the tipping point and triggered its candidacy as Canada's worst government." Quite honestly, when you look through this article, they go on and spell out some of the improper decisions that really augment the strength of that "Canada's worst government" argument.

There is another one on the 27th of October. The article—it's a well-written article—says, "The Ontario government wants to blame record deficits on recession, but their spending is the problem." The title of this article here is "Dalton McSpendy." It's quite an interesting article. It goes on to explain—and this is where the

element of trust comes into it. He says that Premier McGuinty last week pegged this province's deficit at \$24.7 billion, with an added deficit of \$21.1 billion and \$19.4 billion forecast for the next two fiscal years.

1700

This is going to be a continual saga of operating deficits, and there's a lack of a plan to recover from this. Even the addition of the education announcement for early learning announced \$500 million and as much as \$1.5 billion additional spending at a time when they can't afford the services we have now.

But the important part of that is they have no intention of addressing the spending problem they have. In fact, this article goes on and say, "By all accounts, the growth in government spending in Ontario has been startling. During its first term, Premier McGuinty's government ramped up spending from \$73.9 billion in 2003-04 to \$96.5 billion in 2007-08, an increase of more than 30%."

"To finance its four-year spending spree and move from a significant deficit..." all the way through has an indication that they really do have a serious spending problem. They haven't met a promise that they couldn't break, and all of the promises they make include spending more money. That's the problem. If you look at the reality in the economy—not just in eHealth, the wasteful, scandalous spending of \$1 billion that we're calling for a full public inquiry on. We should give free rein to the Auditor General of the province of Ontario to bring into account if this spending is value for money based.

What is the plan here for energy prices going up? Auto insurance premiums are going up. They're cutting transfer payments to municipalities we've learned today. The list goes on of spending more and actually getting less.

We're seeing it in my riding in health care more specifically. They just announced a restructuring in the Lakeridge Corp., a shortfall of some \$13 million. This means nurses being cut. This means procedures being cut.

We've heard about the children's aid society. Every children's aid in the province is short funding. We see all of the core issues being savaged, while at the same time they're announcing more spending in programs that won't happen until 2015-16. There will be two elections before that period.

So it's a matter of trust, as I started saying at the beginning. Can you trust anything they're saying? They're wandering around without a plan. They're on a spending spree by any measure, by any report, and there's another one I want to put on the record, "Deficit-Saddled Ontario Shuns Sweeping Cuts." It says right here they have no plan. That's the Toronto Star. This is a Liberal-friendly document—"has no plan to make any cuts."

All I can say in defence of our call for a public inquiry is that we must call on this Premier over and over again—I call on the people of Ontario to call on the Liberal members who, in the committee, denied a full disclosure in the public accounts committee. Mr. Leal, the member from Peterborough, will be speaking this

afternoon. He knows full well that he was told by Premier McGuinty's office, or the staff itself, to vote down having any more witnesses to bring any more clarity to this issue.

The case has been made. We need a full public hearing and a full public inquiry on this important issue of overspending in eHealth and other areas.

ROYAL ASSENT

SANCTION ROYALE

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The clock will be stopped for just a moment as I beg to inform the House that in the name of Her Majesty the Queen, His Honour the Lieutenant Governor was pleased to assent to certain bills in his office.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): The following are the titles of the bills to which His Honour did assent:

Bill 173, An Act to amend the Mining Act / *Projet de loi 173, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les mines.*

Bill 183, An Act to revise and modernize the law related to apprenticeship training and trades qualifications and to establish the Ontario College of Trades / *Projet de loi 183, Loi visant à réviser et à moderniser le droit relatif à la formation en apprentissage et aux qualifications professionnelles et à créer l'Ordre des métiers de l'Ontario.*

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I just want to take a minute or so to engage in debate on this opposition day motion. I've been listening attentively to the opposition about their request today and all the wrongdoings. I just want to say that this is a legacy that we found ourselves with; it wasn't started by this government. Yes, the Auditor General, under our watch—we moved forward. We asked the Auditor General to get to the bottom of it. He made some recommendations. We, as the government, accept our responsibility, as any government should do, not to hide behind those kinds of recommendations. They're implemented.

I will say that we've put some laws in place that go even further than what was there before. Although some regulatory regime was there in the past, this will only strengthen that.

They refer to "the \$1-billion boondoggle." I think experts have come forward—and I'm talking about experts here on the ground. I spoke to my own doctor and to some officials from the health delivery community. They tell us that the majority of the money that was spent was on pieces of the puzzle for eHealth that are going to deliver us the full package down the road.

Yes, there has been some waste, and I think anybody would admit to that. We're getting down to the nitty-

gritty of that. Do we need to spend more time and money? I think we need to move forward.

The purpose of this motion is typical of the opposition—to try to stall things and to make some political hay. The thing we're talking about here is the health and the well-being of Ontarians.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: It is somewhat with sadness that I rise to speak to this opposition day motion. It really shouldn't be needed. However, we all know—everyone in this House knows—that some serious questions remain, questions that call for this government to implement a commission of inquiry. We have a Public Inquiries Act for a reason. We have this legislation. On occasion, there are times in the history of this province when that legislation has to be acted upon.

When you get questions that are floating out there about price-fixing, not only in this House but elsewhere in Ontario and throughout our ridings, questions about bid-rigging of contracts, not only at eHealth but also at the Ministry of Health, that provides reason right there to make use of the Public Inquiries Act.

At the end of the day, Ontario families have had their money blown by a government that seems to spend money first and ask questions later. I think we all realize in this House the value of a public inquiry, and to my view, in many ways it's just that: It's public. It can be a way to find out, in a very public way, with public participation in the process and in the hearings—very simply to not only find out what happened, to look back, but it also gives us an opportunity to look forward and it gives this government—it gives our society, really—an opportunity to deliberate on reform, to ensure that something like this doesn't happen again.

We hear words like “transparency” and “accountability.” That can be achieved definitively through a public inquiry. These are two things that people expect of their government.

Regrettably, the behaviour so far of this government has given people in our province every right to really feel cynical about politicians, and I'm referring to members on all sides of the House because we're all part of this if we continue, on the government side, to see this blocked or if we don't speak up in opposition.

Two scandals involving Liberal friends and insiders, involving billions of taxpayer dollars that were squandered, contribute to the figure we just heard yesterday, the \$24.7-billion deficit.

1710

In my mind, clearly a public inquiry is needed to answer the kinds of questions the Auditor General could not address through his deliberations.

I'll quote Auditor General McCarter: “In our opinion, the allegations that contracts were awarded to certain consultants and vendors without giving other firms the chance to compete for the business are largely true.” These are not my words; these are the words of Auditor General McCarter. “In fact, we estimate,” he goes on to

say, “that two thirds of the value of all eHealth Ontario contracts was sole-sourced. Allegations that the agency showed favouritism in awarding some of these contracts are also true.” Again, not my words; these are direct quotes from Auditor General McCarter.

Sure, the health minister has resigned. He's not the only one, clearly, who has had problems looking after the purse. Quite honestly, on his resignation, I fully expected the former Minister of Health to step down as well, the reason being that many of the biggest abuses of taxpayer money occurred under the eye of Minister Smitherman. As McCarter notes, under both ministers Caplan and Smitherman the eHealth program was rife with problems. Together, they helped create somewhat of a consultant free-for-all, with millions going out the door to pay fees for which virtually no or little accountability was demanded.

I'll quote further: “By 2008, the branch was engaging more than 300 consultants compared to fewer than 30 full-time ministry employees.... Consultants were not only managing other consultants but also at times had the authority to hire more consultants, sometimes from their own firm.”

As well, the former health minister was not alone in approving a massive, \$30-million eHealth Ontario contract to Liberal friends at IBM. Fellow caucus members—Dwight Duncan, Gerry Phillips, Monique Smith, Ted McMeekin and Michael Chan—also sat on that cabinet committee and gave their nod, their wink, with respect to approval.

So what bothers me and what bothers many people I talk to in my riding is the lack of accountability underlying a seeming culture of entitlement and a culture that has allowed \$1 billion in precious health care dollars to be lost forever.

Even the Auditor General's report strongly suggests there may have been deliberate collusion and bid-rigging at eHealth. Clearly the eHealth initiative was designed originally to save us money while creating seamless, speedy access to individual health information. So far, as we know, it has cost us \$1 billion and left us with virtually nothing. This makes gun registration look credible.

I really should remind everyone here—the story gets worse—that the same day the Auditor General's report came out, we got word that the Cancer Care Ontario audit showed that that provincial agency handed out consulting contracts in the same questionable ways as eHealth. It gave a consulting firm \$18.7 million in deals over two years, some in the form of so-called follow-on agreements, a practice that allowed them to be added to the current contract without, again, being open to bid.

The Auditor General's report highlights the role of the powerful Management Board of Cabinet in waiving the rules relating to these untendered contracts in August of 2008. Again, a public inquiry is an opportunity to fully investigate how extensively members of Management Board were involved in the eHealth scandal.

The Auditor General himself reported incidents of overt obstruction of his probe by officials of the

McGuinty government. To me, this represents potentially a massive abuse of power, again, that requires an independent probe. We need to find out what really went on.

The Auditor General's probe lacked the mandate and resources to fully look at Liberal affiliations of the individuals involved or to conclusively determine which individuals made personal financial gains. Again, things like this can come out in a public inquiry.

While he was in opposition, Mr. McGuinty was not shy about pushing for public inquiries. So merely admitting that you've made "some mistakes," when there are billions of dollars that have been wasted, is simply not good enough.

Given the potentially criminal behaviour hinted at in the Auditor General's report, including potential collusion, bid-rigging, as well as instances of overt obstruction of the Auditor General's probe, in my view, in the view of the opposition, only an independent, neutral, objective, impartial public inquiry with a full mandate to subpoena testimony and documents will provide the kinds of answers that people in this great province of Ontario require.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Trinity-Spadina.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Beaches-East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: Thank you. I was looking for my colleague; I didn't see him here.

I have been listening to this debate for most of the afternoon. I did not stand up before because I didn't know exactly how to deal with this. I am in some considerable agreement with what has been put forward in the motion, but I also understand the reluctance of some members of this House to support it.

This motion is calling for a number of things, some of which I support, some of which I do not; some of which I believe, some of which I do not. What I do think is necessary, though, is the fourth part of the motion, whether there were affiliations between the Liberal Party of Ontario and persons involved in the eHealth scandal, including but not limited to former political staff in the offices of Premier McGuinty and Minister Smitherman. I do believe that that needs to be explored, because the auditor was very clear in his report that he did not have a mandate. He did not have a blind eye, but he did not have a mandate to look at that. Mostly what I hear from people, mostly that which is swirling around outside of this Legislature, involves this.

I will categorically state that I believe that the people who work in this Legislature are honourable. I do not believe that any of them have a criminal intent. I do not believe that any of them deliberately tried to price-fix or bid-rig. I do not believe that any of them went forward knowingly and purposely trying to have untendered contracts. And I don't believe that any of them attempted, wilfully, to obstruct the Auditor General.

I do understand why this has been put forward, but I think that in putting forward this kind of argument, it demeans this Legislature. It demeans the men and women who work in this Legislature. It demeans me in opposition, because when I walk out into the streets and go into Beaches-East York or travel around this great province, the feeling about politicians is not the same feeling that people had 10, 20 or 50 years ago. I remember a time—and I'm not that old—when the men and women who came to this Legislature were the absolute epitome of what every community could send. They were the men and women who were the voice of reason. They were the men and women who talked the great issues of the day and helped to make the decisions of people who could not afford the luxury or the time or even some who had the education to understand the complex issues.

I am not going to be supporting this resolution because it says that someone acting in good faith—and I believe they all acted in good faith—did something that was improper. I am only going to support this resolution for the last item, and that is because I think people out there are demanding to know whether there was favouritism in the awarding of contracts. I certainly need to know that, I certainly want to know that, my constituents want to know that, and I am voicing what I hope is a very reasoned opinion: that this is something that the government should embrace, that this is something that the members on the other side should say, with all honesty, "We have nothing to hide. We need to bring this out so that if it happened, it won't happen again. If it didn't happen, we need to clear the air—that we were not responsible and there was no favouritism given to those who once worked for us, to those who had ties with our government or to those who were our friends." For that reason, I'm going to support the motion.

1720

Having said that, I want to be very clear. I want this to be very well-understood: I cast not a single aspersion on the minister who has resigned; on the Deputy Premier, who was there; or on the Premier, whom I consider to be a man of honesty. I don't know how to say it any more than that.

Everyone in this place tries to do the best they can. Sometimes they don't. That is my job in opposition. The people have determined that I am not to be in a government; we only got 10 seats. My job is to stand here each and every day and hold the government to account.

I am going to vote for this motion because that is my job: to hold this government to account, not to make wild and outlandish statements, not to impugn people's motives, but to hold the government to account.

The reason I think I need to hold them to account is because everything that has unfolded—the very first day when this so-called scandal broke in the paper, I remember clearly what broke. What broke was that one of the consultants expensed tea at Tim Hortons for \$1.65. What broke that day was that there was \$3.99 for Choco Bites; somebody spent \$30 for a car wash; and there were child care expenses that weren't really the way they were sup-

posed to be. That was day one. I remember, on that day, wondering what was going on, never imagining how this would unfold.

I want to take a couple of minutes to say how it unfolded and why it continues to cause me, as a member in opposition, and my constituents, who sent me to this august and wonderful place, to question and to be concerned.

Since that day and what was a relatively minor first revelation, we have learned the following: In the days that followed, we heard about \$3,000-a-day fees that were charged by some of the consultants. We heard about a speech that was written by a consultant that cost \$25,000. After that, we learned about a \$317,000 severance package to eHealth's CEO.

The auditor revealed even more troubling things. The auditor revealed that there were 300 consultants and 30 ministry staff working on this file, and that the number of consultants went from one in 2002-03 to 328 in 2008-09, with a 10,000% increase in the value of consultant contracts. I think people want to know why this happened.

I think the auditor did a brilliant job. I think the auditor did everything that an auditor could do, given the limited number of his staff and given the mandate that he had and where he was supposed to look.

He also revealed that consultants had been on the payroll for six years, some of them. When I was a federal civil servant all those many years ago in the immigration department, if somebody was hired as a temporary or casual worker and worked there for more than one year, the government had to determine why that person was not brought on payroll as permanent staff, because it was supposed to be for a temporary purpose. It was supposed to be for some expertise that was not necessary in the long run. After one year, you were to be made permanent.

I don't understand how a consultant, at much higher rates of pay than most of the public employees of this province, was able to stay on the payroll for six years, getting consultant fees. I would like some answers to that.

There were other things revealed: that a consultant awarded consulting contracts worth over \$1.3 million to a company he was associated with, so therefore a consultant hired somebody and had the authority to spend \$1.3 million on someone else who was a consultant with whom he was associated; and that there was the sole-source hiring of a consultant firm to help hire 15 management positions.

The auditor revealed that there were millions of dollars paid to untendered consultant contracts, with little to show for it. The auditor, although he didn't come right out and say it in words that I think are concrete enough for one to hang one's hat on, said that there was some kind of a bidding system that was not exactly copacetic, that there was favouritism in awarding contracts. In one bid, senior management awarded a bid to a consultant whose bid was much, much higher—some say as much as five times higher—than the next competitor, and

significantly higher than the budget allowed. The auditor revealed that there was a revolving door between work at the ministry and work as a high-priced consultant and that ministers had failed to oversee eHealth.

The auditor, in the end, came to a conclusion that Ontario is at the back of the pack of electronic health records, and the Auditor General said, "The value of this investment ... has not been realized."

So what we have here is that a whole range of things have happened that people are demanding answers to. I sit in this place every day and I listen to question period. I listen to very tough questions from the leader of the official opposition and from all the people who are members of the official opposition. I hear equally tough questions asked by my colleagues in the NDP, my leader Andrea Horwath and other members of my caucus, asking equally tough questions. I was taught a long time ago that it's called question period but don't expect questions to be—it's not called "answer period" for a reason, because one cannot expect that answers will actually be forthcoming. I wish that sometimes they were, because had the answers been forthcoming, the people's fears would have been assuaged, people would understand what has happened, would accept that perhaps mistakes were made and would go on to the next facet of our lives.

But in fact, that is not what has happened. The reason I believe that the opposition is standing up and asking for this commission is because those questions have not been answered. That's why I think they need to be.

I commend the auditor. I think the auditor did a very good job. I agree with the government members. The auditor did a very good job. But is there more to be asked? That's the question. Is there more to be asked? I believe there is more to be asked, that there are questions that are not being answered that have been asked. They are pushed aside.

Every day when I stand in this place, every day when I listen in this place, I hear answers that I don't want to hear. I know the members opposite are entitled to say them. They say, "When you were in government things were exactly the same. When you were in government or when something happened in 1975, this is what happened then." I don't think the people of Ontario care what happened in 1975. I don't think, honestly, most of them care what happened to the NDP government of 1990-95 and most of them—or, as we get closer, some of them still care, but I would think the overwhelming majority don't care what happened during the Harris and Eves governments that followed.

What they care about is what the men and women in this chamber are doing: Why are they doing it, is it justifiable, can we hear the facts? I don't want to hear blame. I don't want to go back 20 years. Certainly, I wasn't here. I often hear, and I chuckle when they say "when you were in government." I have never been in government. I don't know. I have never been government in this place. I have been here for more than eight years. I have always been on this side. I wasn't here when the

NDP was in government and I don't know what it was like. I don't really know. I was a simple mayor in a medium-sized or rather larger than medium-sized municipality. So I don't think that's the answer I want to hear and I certainly know it's not the answer that the people of Ontario want to hear.

I'm supporting this for a second reason, and that is because the sad reality is that our health care system is under increasing strain. If you go anywhere in this country and you ask people, "What is the thing that makes you proudest to be a Canadian? What is the thing that makes you proudest to be an Ontarian?" they will almost universally tell you, "It's our health care system." They will almost universally say they don't understand the debate that's going on south of the border; they don't understand why President Obama is having such a difficult time convincing Americans to adopt our system, and they almost universally will tell you that they are proud of our health care system. They know it has difficulties. We know it has difficulties. I know that we can make improvements, and that is our job at legislators: to make sure that those improvements are made.

1730

One of the improvements that needs to be made—surely, clearly—is to have an e-health system. We need to computerize and make that system workable for Ontarians. But at the same time, we have to acknowledge what is happening here because of the downturn in the economy, because I think the government really, given the lack of resources and the declining moneys and the increasing deficit and the problems and the complexity of a society such as our own—after all, some people live in an acephalous society or a near-acephalous society where government is limited. We live in a highly complex world where government is literally everywhere and has a key and important role.

In our society, hospitals are facing soaring deficits that have forced them to cut costs even when it's care that suffers. We have witnessed the loss of emergency rooms, maternity wards and physiotherapy services. As these emergency rooms close in small locations, in Niagara region, in Burk's Falls, in Fort Erie—small communities—it is the hospitals in the larger centres that are increasingly straining under the weight as people have to travel to places like Niagara Falls, which are now serving patients in the communities of Port Colborne and Fort Erie because there are not services for them at home. Since the Port Colborne emergency room closed down, the Welland hospital has faced a 20% increase in patients. But these aren't the only communities that have been losing services. This is happening across the province.

The Minister of Health sometimes, I think, plays on the fact or perhaps doesn't answer the question or says, "When you were in government, these same things happened," and tells the Conservatives that they shut down 28 hospitals. But I don't think that's what the people in Port Colborne or Burk's Falls want to hear. They want to know what's happening to their hospital.

There have been cuts in the Soo: 125 renal dialysis patients were discharged because of cuts to the dialysis clinic, five surgical beds closed, and 12 RN positions are to be eliminated in the spring of 2010 at the Sault Area Hospital. That's what's on the horizon.

In Burk's Falls, the urgent care centre has been closed. There are another 28 beds across the Muskoka, Bracebridge and Huntsville areas on the chopping block. Burk's Falls is planning to close all of their acute care beds. There are currently seven. That may not sound like a lot, but to a community like Burk's Falls, that is the difference perhaps to some of life and death.

In Sudbury, the Sudbury Regional Hospital is poised to cut 37 RN positions because of a \$12-million deficit.

We know that at the same time that these are happening in small and medium-sized communities across Ontario, other things are happening which are disquieting. They are upsetting to ordinary people when they read about them. They don't understand that the jewel that is Canada, the jewel that is Ontario, our health care system, is in such disarray, and they don't understand why they can't have the hospital care that they fervently desire and need when other things are happening.

As an example, in London, Diane Beattie, a vice-president at London Health Sciences Centre, was given a \$451,000 severance package for leaving her job after awarding millions of dollars in electronic health record contracts without seeking competitive bids. People look at their hospital shutting, they see that they don't have the care, they see a nurse being let go, and then they see this. They want this question to be answered—they want me to ask it, they want the Conservatives to ask it, and they want the government perhaps to set up a kind of inquiry that will allow this fact to come out: How can you juxtapose the closing of an emergency facility with somebody getting \$451,000 in severance pay? That's in all the newspapers in the London area, and people are incensed.

Or they look at Windsor, where, at the Hôtel-Dieu Grace Hospital, the neonatal intensive care unit has experienced service reduction, cuts to respiratory therapy, cuts to pain clinics, and other beds and service cuts in order to balance the hospital budget, which they now have. They wonder why all of that had to happen when there are literally millions and billions of dollars that are questionable.

Or why the Guelph General Hospital closed their pain clinic, cut 30 staff and 16 beds; or why the Kitchener St. Mary's General Hospital closed in-patient rehabilitation beds and recently lost their outpatient physiotherapy clinic; or why in Kingston there are huge hospital deficits of \$14 million, the loss of 157 full-time positions and the closure of 20 beds that are planned in the new year; or in Ottawa, where the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario is poised to close six hospital beds and 13 nursing supervisor positions, along with a handful of paramedic and nursing jobs.

Or Quinte Health, located in Belleville and Picton and Trenton: There are rumours circulating in that community—whether true or not, I don't know—that are

being reported in the press that 69 beds are being cut, 79 staff, including nurses, hospital supervisors, and other appointed people who are to be cut. Or in the Cornwall community, where the hospital has closed critical care units and one of two emergency rooms.

But it is not only the hospitals and the hospital-based services that are being cut. We are seeing it all across the system, including the reduction of nurses.

At the same time, we have the whole question of what is happening around eHealth, and we have the question of what happened at the London Health Sciences Centre and Cancer Care Ontario. We have \$1 million a day being paid on consultants. People want to know and they are literally demanding answers. If they are going to have to suffer the loss of something that they hold so dear, what is it that the government is doing? What has gone wrong? How can it be fixed?

I am not looking here to lay blame; I am looking to see how this government, my government, can fix it, because it is my government too. I look to my government for leadership. I look to see what they are going to do and how they are going to do it and the service that they are going to deliver and the mistakes that they are going to rectify. Whether those mistakes began under a previous government or began anew under theirs matters not to me and matters not to the majority of Ontarians. What matters is that the problem is fixed.

Maybe it is time for this government to seriously consider bringing the development of this system back into the public sector. We must learn the lesson of the need for proper accountability mechanisms and responsible procurement policies. I am a firm believer, an unremitting believer, a true believer that the public service provides excellent work and knowledge for a government. I am a firm believer that public employees can do the job as well as or better than anybody you bring from the outside, including legions, myriad legions of consultants. I do not understand this government's penchant for hiring outside people when we have thousands upon thousands of dedicated people who work for this province and who can provide that kind of information.

I go back to my own experience as a mayor, back to a time when there was a call for privatization, and how people said that the private sector could do better and that outside consultants could do better. I want to tell you, never once in my experience of those years did the outside consultants who came in or the people who were contracted out, and those services that were contracted out, compare to the public employees' dedication to job, dedication to the community, and overall knowledge of what needed to be done. It is time that this government saves money, in my view, by going back to those people who have given a lifetime of dedication and service to our community.

But we must also learn the lesson of the need for proper accountability mechanisms and responsible procurement policies. I think that will happen—I know that will happen—if there is a commission that recommends it.

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There is no question that building an electronic health records system will require investment. I am willing to make that investment, provided that in the end I see results from that investment that are commensurate with the amount of money we have spent and what we expect from it. I am not willing to make that investment to see the money frittered away on needless consultants and on \$1.65 cups of tea and Choco Bites.

New Democrats want to see wise investment and investment that is based on the needs of patients and the building of a coordinated, interdisciplinary health care system. We must never forget that what is at stake here is not only a complex IT puzzle but also the provision of world-class care. We have it within our power, surely, to have the best health care system in the world. We once could brag of that, and we can brag of it again.

New Democrats have been extremely concerned that eHealth Ontario, even before this latest disaster, has not been focused on implementing a system that prioritizes coordination over all else. Ontario's public health system has been raising flags about the absence of proper plans to have systems speak to each other. This happens elsewhere. It happens in literally every industry.

I'd like to close with a couple of things and the reason why I hope this government will allow, at least in part, a truncated, limited, small commission to look at whether or not there have been any other abuses of the system—I'm not looking for criminality; if there's criminality, I think the police should be called in—looking at those other things that can be done and must be done right.

Ontarians need and deserve a high-functioning system of electronic health records; that cannot be disputed. But let us not ignore the reality that the electronic health records that function best are those that grow out of a health care system that values interdisciplinary and comprehensive care. That's what we need. That's what we need to engender; that's what we need to produce. We need a system where primary health care providers work together, are able to collaborate, and essentially achieve the second stage of medicare.

If we take a moment to have a reality check, to look back on the failure that has been the Smart Systems for Health and eHealth, because they have both failed the people of Ontario, we see the real tragedy that we have at hand. We have a tragedy of expectations that have not been met. We have a tragedy of ordinary people who look upon this Legislature and see scandal instead of hard-working men and women who are trying to make Ontario a better place. We have a scandal of a system, and we have a system where they see their money being frittered away and wasted and where they see their own particular circumstances, in places like Port Colborne and Burk's Falls, being decimated. This is not the Ontario they want to see. They are calling out to this Legislature, they are calling out to me in opposition, they are calling out to the government to do something. If all we can do is set up a commission to find out how to do it better, then I'm going to vote for it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate.

Mr. Jeff Leal: It is indeed a pleasure to have the opportunity to speak on this resolution this afternoon. I had an opportunity to review this resolution this morning, and I immediately went to the library. I got myself a book called *One Dead Indian*.

Interjection.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order. The member for Renfrew.

Mr. Jeff Leal: This is a book that's called *One Dead Indian*. It was written by Mr. Peter Edwards, who was a columnist with the *Toronto Star*. Mr. Edwards chronicled in this book—it's a good read. I recommend that everybody in this House should take the opportunity to read this book because it talks about the tragic circumstances of the death of Dudley George.

What's interesting is that I hear that the Leader of the Opposition, who put forward this motion, was a senior member of the cabinet for eight years, between 1995 and 2003. When you read this book, every day the very distinguished member from Scarborough–Agincourt asked the government of the day for a public inquiry regarding the circumstances of the tragic death of Dudley George.

I want to take a couple of quotes from this very fine book. In fact, as early as 1999, the Ombudsman, who was consulted on this particular issue, issued a report that suggested there should be a public inquiry into the circumstances around the death of Dudley George. Indeed, the member from Scarborough–Agincourt brought forward a private member's bill to ask that a full public inquiry be held in this particular case. I'm not going to spend the time, but I could identify members opposite who stood up one by one to quash the private member's bill of the honourable member from Scarborough–Agincourt.

If you want to talk about excessive government spending, this book goes on, and I reference page 236, about how taxpayers' money was spent defending the Premier of the day, two Attorneys General who were involved with this, several other cabinet ministers, and the legal bill went ticking, ticking, ticking.

Indeed, it was interesting, when we came to government, that one of the first things we did was to make sure that we held an inquiry into those circumstances. It's also interesting that one of the Attorneys General who came forward in that public inquiry, Charles Harnick, admitted that he misled the Ontario Legislature in response to several questions dealing with this particular matter.

If you go back to 1956, when the British Prime Minister, Anthony Eden, misled the British Parliament with regard to Great Britain's involvement in the Suez crisis, he was forced to resign his job of Prime Minister. So it's really interesting that this resolution lacks all credibility when we have the Leader of the Opposition coming forward, and he rejected, for eight long years, an investigation on a subject that mattered to the people of

Ontario. What kind of dollar value do you put on the death of an individual?

Everybody is talking about articles from papers. I just picked this one up. This was a *Toronto Star*, October 25, 2009, letter to the editor. It says, "Time to End the eHealth Blame Game."

"Since 2007, our hospital has been implementing components of electronic health records throughout our facility. Sadly, the result of the eHealth controversy is that progress is now stalled."

"It's time for all parties to note that the storm is over—the minister is gone, key personnel in the agency have changed and the new board chairwoman, Rita Burak, is moving ahead after offering an apology to the people of Ontario."

"But the opposition parties are still vying for a fight. Tim Hudak's comments in the *Star* are both wrong and harmful. To imply that \$1 billion of taxpayer money 'got flushed down the drain' is ridiculous and misleading. The public needs to know that much has been put in place and that, currently, progress is being stalled because of the controversy. It's time to get on with the job."

"Hudak would serve this province better if he did his research, learned about the many eHealth initiatives currently in place or pending and pressed our new chairwoman to get the job done. The controversy is over: Please let's get on with the job."

Who is the author of this letter to the editor? Let me tell you who it is. I should say that the member from Muskoka–Parry Sound should listen. It's from Ms. Lynne Atkinson, executive director, West Parry Sound Health Centre Foundation—a lady who is non-partisan, who is an expert in the field and is saying exactly what we need: to get on with this.

Let me conclude. My favourite passage in the Bible is John 23: "Let he who has no sin cast the first stone."

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Hudak has moved opposition day number 2. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1749 to 1759.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Amott, Ted
Bailey, Robert
Barrett, Toby
Dunlop, Garfield
Gélinas, France
Hardeman, Ernie
Hillier, Randy
Hudak, Tim
Martiniuk, Gerry
Miller, Norm
Munro, Julia
O'Toole, John
Ouellette, Jerry J.
Prue, Michael

Runciman, Robert W.
Savoline, Joyce
Shuman, Peter
Sterling, Norman W.
Witmer, Elizabeth
Yakubski, John

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those opposed, please rise one at a time and be recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Albanese, Laura
Balkissoon, Bas
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Best, Margaret
Bradley, James J.
Brotten, Laurel C.
Brown, Michael A.
Cansfield, Donna H.
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dickson, Joe
Dombrowsky, Leona
Flynn, Kevin Daniel

Hoskins, Eric
Jaczek, Helena
Johnson, Rick
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Leal, Jeff
Mangat, Amrit
Matthews, Deborah
McMeekin, Ted
McNeely, Phil
Meilleur, Madeleine
Moridi, Reza
Naqvi, Yasir
Pendergast, Leeanna

Phillips, Gerry
Ramal, Khalil
Ramsay, David
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Van Bommel, Maria
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller):
The ayes are 20; the nays are 37.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negatived.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): It being slightly past 6 of the clock, this House is adjourned until 9 o'clock on Thursday morning, October 29.

The House adjourned at 1802.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
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Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener-Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin-Middlesex-London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough-Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches-East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London-Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming-Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland-Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds-Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton-Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto-Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga-Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton-Kent-Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West-Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest-Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth-Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe-Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener-Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew-Nipissing-Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Khalil Ramal
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David Orazietti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
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Jim Wilson
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
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Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

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Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

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Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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**Official Report
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(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
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Thursday 29 October 2009



Jeudi 29 octobre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 29 October 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 29 octobre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

VISITOR

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'd like to welcome the member for Huron-Bruce's daughter, who is here today.

ONTARIO LABOUR MOBILITY ACT, 2009 LOI ONTARIENNE DE 2009 SUR LA MOBILITÉ DE LA MAIN-D'OEUVRE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 28, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 175, An Act to enhance labour mobility between Ontario and other Canadian provinces and territories / Projet de loi 175, Loi visant à accroître la mobilité de la main-d'œuvre entre l'Ontario et les autres provinces et les territoires du Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Paul Miller: Bill 175, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, at one level, is intended to implement Ontario's obligations under the Agreement on Internal Trade, which is an agreement among the provinces and territories to remove labour mobility barriers within Canada. At its most basic, the bill would permit certified workers in professions and skilled trades to move among jurisdictions or choose to live in one of the provinces or territories yet practise their occupation or trade in another. This includes certain residency restrictions imposed at the municipal level. The bill would apply to a vast range of occupations, from lawyers and accountants to motor vehicle dealers to tradespersons under the Apprenticeship and Certification Act.

However, there are reasonably good grounds to question that motive and see this legislation as yet another step to deregulate the labour market and to lower skills standards in the long term. Section 8 prohibits Ontario regulatory authorities—trade and occupational colleges etc.—from requiring an individual to be a resident in the province as a condition of being certified in a regulated

trade or occupation and being able to work in Ontario. Municipalities are also under restrictions when it comes to hiring individuals in their catchment area. Section 9 of the act obliges the regulatory authorities to recognize skills and occupational certificates when it comes to licensing out-of-province workers to work in Ontario, even if the standards of out-of-province workers are lower.

I have been saying for a long time that the regulations and certificates should be country-wide, not different in different jurisdictions, because it definitely has a negative impact on the quality of workmanship. Over the years, I've seen many projects in my city that non-union, non-certified labour has put together, and within 10 or 15 years there are problems with marble installation, problems with plumbing, problems with electrical on these types of buildings on which they've used cheap labour, non-certified labour and the quality of workmanship is terrible. At one point we even had to repair city hall because the marble was falling off; it wasn't installed properly. Century 21 in Hamilton: another construction nightmare.

Whether they're unionized or non-unionized, these workers should all have the same qualifications and be certified. I feel that the union situation has always turned out quality craftsmen, because they go through strict regulation and strict training. It's similar for everyone, and makes it a lot more coordinated and makes for a lot more quality of workmanship in the end.

Section 8 prohibits that from happening. First, it's not clear that there are sufficient interprovincial labour mobility barriers to justify the legislation requiring regulators to recognize occupational certifications given in other provinces with more modest standards, and will likely create pressure to lower the standards in our province over the long run. By prohibiting residency requirements as a condition for certification to work in Ontario, Bill 175 will likely increase competition for skilled jobs in Ontario at a time of high unemployment and create downward pressure on wages and benefits in our province. While certain exceptions to 175 are detailed, these exceptions may be challenged before private tribunals that are neither transparent nor accountable.

There is no demonstrable rationale or need for Bill 175, as virtually all significant labour mobility issues have been successfully addressed over recent years through interprovincial co-operation and other voluntary initiatives such as the red seal program for skilled trades. Requiring Ontario regulators to recognize occupational certifications given in other provinces with more modest standards will create pressure for them to reduce their

own standards to a lower denominator. The requirement for regulatory authorities to harmonize their standards with those of other jurisdictions will add to this already large pressure.

Bill 175 has imposed and will continue to impose significant resource demands on Ontario ministries and regulatory authorities that must now take informed judgments about the efficacy of occupational certification standards and practices in other provinces, and justify any higher standard requirements they wish to maintain and apply to those seeking occupational certifications in our province. However, neither the provincial government nor non-governmental regulatory authorities have the capacity to monitor the licensing and certification practices of other jurisdictions.

This is also problematic in light of the increasing role being played by private training and certification companies that may provide poor training or even fraudulent certifications. We've already seen this happening in the province, where people find that their certifications from some of these private colleges don't quite cut it, and people won't hire them because they don't feel they are qualified, and they're following the rules, as they should.

Under Bill 175, municipalities and regulatory authorities, such as the college of nurses and the association of early childhood educators, are exposed to monetary sanctions as high as \$5 million for each instance of non-compliance with either Bill 175 or the AIT labour mobility agreement, or both. Moreover, the nature and extent of this liability may be extended by the Premier or his minister if they choose to enter into new or amended agreements under the AIT.

By prohibiting residency requirements as a condition for certification in Ontario while lowering the bar for certain certifications, Bill 175 will likely increase competition for jobs and employment in Ontario, which, in the context of relatively high employment, would create pressure on wages and benefits. I have to reiterate that because, speaking from a trades perspective, I know that when you go to other provinces, the local tradespeople are what they call "booked out" first before any people from out of the province can get a job, and they have to work under what's called a permit, to work in that local in a unionized situation.

This is going to create some problems locally, as was witnessed in Cornwall, Ontario, when they contracted out for the local hospital. The lowest bidder took it, but the lowest bidder happened to be from Quebec, and the Quebec contractor decided to hire Quebec tradespeople to work in Cornwall. The local trades were very upset and actually went around with a petition through town. Most of the people in town were upset too, because their brothers and fathers and sisters were unemployed while people in Quebec were taking their jobs and spending their money back in Quebec. The local economy took a hit because the people in the area weren't working. Not a good suggestion.

0910

Bill 175 will do nothing to enhance the competence, skill or integrity of Ontario tradespersons and profession-

als. It is, in fact, likely to have an opposite effect: By ensuring certification to those trained in a lower standard, Bill 175 will unnecessarily put at risk public safety and the health and well-being of Ontarians. The mobility scheme that would be established by this is also likely to undermine the quality of a myriad of services offered by teachers, health care professionals, accountants—even taxi drivers—and other skilled workers and professionals.

The fact that people come from other jurisdictions and other countries doesn't mean that we should lower the level of qualification. It doesn't mean that we should lower our standards. If they're the highest in Canada, so be it; the higher the better. If those people can meet those requirements and pass those tests, they're more than welcome to have those skills used in our province, but I am not going to stand here and listen to people say we should lower the standards or accept lower standards from other provinces or people coming into Ontario just because they're from another country or province. That's nonsense. If you're qualified as an ironworker or welder or electrician, then you should be qualified and recognized throughout our country and North America—anywhere else in the world, for that matter. High training and high qualifications are what's best for Ontario and best for our safety.

It's important to note that only 20% of Canadian workers are employed in regulated occupations or trades, most as professionals, skilled technicians or people who work in compulsory trades. Under our federal system, provinces decide what occupational standards are needed to ensure workers are properly qualified and will not put—I'll reiterate—will not put their clients in a position of possibly being sued for liability for lack of workmanship or lack of quality in their buildings. It also puts pressure on heavy equipment operators, paramedics, accountants and other skilled workers who deal with the public on a regular basis and work in those situations where safety is of the utmost importance.

To ensure that provincial standards do not unduly impede labour mobility, the provinces have established various programs to reconcile competing standards where they're appropriate. In fact, several federal-provincial bodies have mandates to address labour mobility issues, including the forum of labour market ministers, which was established in 1983 to facilitate interjurisdictional discussion and co-operation on labour market issues. The FLMM has responsibility for implementing the labour mobility chapter of AIT and has developed detailed—I repeat—detailed guidelines for complying with these AIT rules.

In addition, the labour mobility coordinating group of the FLMM monitors and reports on progress with implementation of the AIT rules concerning labour mobility. The primary focus of the LMCG reports has been on 50 regulated occupations, many of which are the subject of mutual recognition agreements that are already in place among provincial regulatory bodies, under which the qualifications of workers from other provinces are recognized. So we do recognize other qualifications if it falls within our mandate in Ontario. It's already there.

Mobility in the trades is primarily addressed through a parallel process, the red seal program, which allows qualified tradespersons to practise their trades in any province or territory without having to write additional examinations. One of the problems in the past was that if I had my welding qualifications—which I did—in Ontario under the Canadian Welding Bureau, CWB, and I went to Alberta or Saskatchewan, I'd have to rewrite my test, which is absolute nonsense. If I'm qualified in Ontario, which has high standards, I should be able to practise my trades—plural—in other provinces without having to rewrite an interprovincial test. That was the big stumbling block for people moving out of province. That has been removed. You do not have to do that now.

It is apparent that labour mobility issues have been given considerable attention by Canadian governments and that significant progress has been made to address whatever mobility problems may have—may have—existed. Support for the notion that few real impediments exist to labour mobility can be found in the record of disputes that have been filed under the AIT labour mobility agreement since its inception 15 years ago. The AIT website documents only 23 such complaints from 1996 to 2009—under the act are not subject to the administrative penalties that may be imposed on other regulatory authorities, as in sections 18 to 20 of Bill 175, they may be compelled to pay penalties assessed against the province arising from mobility disputes proceeded with under AIT mobility and dispute rules.

Consequential amendments are also proposed to the Trades Qualification and Apprenticeship Act, the Social Work and Social Service Work Act and several other statutes in our province. These amendments warrant scrutiny and analysis, particularly by those who will be directly affected by them. To underscore the importance of this analysis, it is worth noting in regard to the application of the mobility rules to social workers that in response to a number of cases of the deaths of children, Ontario created the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, which required all registered social workers to hold a university degree—another high standard set by this province in the past.

We do not want to play around with the high standards. We want to continue them, and whoever comes here from whatever country or province will fall under those guidelines. Also, it will protect them from any liability situations. It also protects them and makes them as qualified as anyone else in this province to practise their trade with no questions asked—best way to go.

In conclusion, the foregoing provides an overview of the key elements of Bill 175, which demands more thorough assessment than is permitted here. As the bill is now in second reading, it is important that those who will be directly affected by its sweeping provisions quickly take up the challenge of assessing its prospective impact on the regulated occupations and employment in our province. Beyond these impacts, there are also potentially highly problematic impacts on public safety, consumer protection and the quality of a broad diversity of services

provided by the skilled trades, professionals and other workers in these regulated occupations.

The notion of increased labour mobility may be expected to have a general appeal and may not provoke much interest or reaction. However, as the analysis reveals, Bill 175 has much less to do with resolving largely nonexistent labour mobility problems than it does a program of labour market deregulation largely driven by federal policies that favour reducing the role and capacity of government and public bodies to regulate in the economic sphere. Unfortunately, and for reasons that remain largely obscure, the Ontario government is seeking to implement these policies of deregulation by applying them to standards governing the training and qualifications of a diversity of workers and professionals that provide important and often vital services to our society. In our view, there is a pressing need for the province to step back from its commitment to such an agenda until there can be a full and public consideration of its true purposes and effects.

If I was drafting a bill like this, I'd be having tradespeople—union, non-union, construction companies, people who do this every day—the people in the trenches would be coming to committee, which I hope will be more than one or two days, like the present government always does; it should be at least a week to discuss a major bill like this that's going to affect hundreds of thousands of professionals and tradespeople in our country. They should take the time, and also take the time to listen to people who know the trade. Some of us have been in it for over 30 years and might have some good suggestions for the government in committee. But unfortunately, when I go to committee, half of them from the government side don't read the bill, they don't look at it and they vote whatever they're told to vote, which is terrible, because there are a lot of good suggestions that come from the official opposition and the third party that could make this bill stronger and a lot better.

I know that my Bill 6, which was good for the people of Ontario—not only did they not read it, they just went through the motions and voted against it and didn't even take the time—absolutely terrible. I think that if people really knew how much involvement their representatives have in these committees when there's a majority government, they'd be disgusted.

0920

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: To the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek: I listened to you very carefully when you spoke on this bill and I think you agree with the majority of the concept of the bill. I know you talk about the criteria and the standards. Of course this bill is not asking to lower the standards for the people who come to the province of Ontario. We're talking about eliminating all unnecessary barriers facing many skilled workers who come from different provinces. This is what we're talking about.

Also, yesterday I had the chance to speak on this bill, and when I talk about people who come from different

nations with different skills and professions, I never said, and I will never say in the future, that we should lower the standards, because it's very important for us as the province of Ontario, as the people of this province, to make sure that all the standards stay in place in this province.

The most important thing is that when people move from Alberta or British Columbia, in terms of immigration levels, they have no issue. They can move any time; they can go and come back and live in Ontario. If somebody graduated from British Columbia with a certain degree, it's shameful to have them in the province of Ontario—even though they have the same standards and the same qualifications—and not be able to use his or her qualifications in this province because they have graduated from a different province. I think this bill talks about creating some kind of mobility and flexibility in the system, not by lowering the standards, but by eliminating all unnecessary barriers facing the people of this great nation.

Everyone around this province is talking about the shortage of skilled workers in Ontario. Why not? Since we have a lot in this nation, we can share the wealth, we can share the knowledge and we can share the experience, on one condition: if they have the same qualifications and they have the same criteria which are required in the province of Ontario in order to work in this province. That's what we are talking about, and hopefully when this bill goes to the committee, we'll see a lot of recommendations from the opposition and hopefully we'll listen to them too.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I had the opportunity to listen intently to my colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek, and I think he raises a number of points which people across Ontario should be considering very carefully. There are at least a few legal opinions that have been written which analyze not only this bill but analyze some of the rhetoric which lies beneath this bill. My colleague from Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has correctly referred to those legal opinions. What this bill intends to do is to begin the rush to the lowest common denominator; to, in effect, lower the standards for apprenticeships, lower the standards for training of tradespeople and lower the health and safety standards. In effect, we don't think this is good for Ontario workers. We don't believe this will be good for the public of Ontario and we don't believe it will be good for the economy of Ontario.

I think the member was quite correct to point out the fiasco that happened in Cornwall. The McGuinty Liberals boast about a new hospital, but the workers who work in Cornwall and who pay taxes in Cornwall ostensibly had to watch while that structure was built by someone who really had no stake in the community. That's an example of where this is taking us. People who live and work in Ontario, people who contribute to the community and who pay taxes in Ontario ought to be able to count on something—not a race to the bottom, a race to the lowest common denominator.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm very pleased to comment on this bill. It's interesting to note that the provincial and federal governments have been working on this whole issue of labour mobility in Canada since 1994. I really take exception to calling this simply rhetoric. I remember when I was going door-to-door in 2003 and knocked on a door and ran into a mother who was very distraught. Her son had gone to McGill—not an unusual thing to do in Ontario, to go to McGill. He had applied not just on his undergrad but he had applied to go to medical school. He was going to medical school and was about to graduate and realized where this was all leading: He would be licensed to practise medicine in Quebec, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario wasn't going to accept that he could practise medicine in Ontario. I can't imagine anything sillier than a doctor who has been educated at McGill being rejected for practice in Ontario.

This bill will fix this. It will say that if you have a legitimate qualification in another province—it could be anything from a doctor to a carpenter; whatever it is that requires regulation or some sort of certification—you can transfer your skills from province to province. There is an exception clause, which we don't expect will be used a lot, but where there are clearly very wide gaps in qualifications, a province can register those gaps. What this does is give Ontario workers the ability to work elsewhere and workers from other places to work in Ontario, and that's a very good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Hamilton East–Stoney Creek has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Paul Miller: All I can say is that I've listened to my colleagues and I'm sure they're trying their best to understand the bill and to make sense of it. But if you spend most of your life in the trades and crafts, as I have with two trades, I think maybe walking in someone else's shoes applies here. Maybe we have some good suggestions.

With all due respect, people who have never used a hammer or saw can try to dissect this and try to understand it, but to live it, to work it for many years, to deal with the people in the trades and the construction groups gives you an insight and understanding of how they feel and what they'd like to see.

These people have come forward to us to tell us what they'd like to see. I'm not sure that the government took the time to talk to some of these people who have such good insight into these types of bills. In the future, when they draft bills, they might want to take under consideration talking to the people who really know what's going on.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ça me fait un grand plaisir de pouvoir participer au débat ce matin.

Il faut se rappeler que les premiers ministres se sont rencontrés pour discuter de la main-d'œuvre canadienne.

Je dis bien « canadienne » parce que je suis, en premier lieu, Canadien, je suis Ontarien et je suis un Franco-Ontarien. Laissez-moi vous dire que c'est un projet de loi qui touche très bien toutes les provinces de ce grand pays, mais surtout les communautés qui longent la frontière des provinces du Québec et du Manitoba.

Je me rappelle qu'en 1996, j'ai déposé un projet de loi concernant la main-d'œuvre de la construction, la mobilité des travailleurs de la construction. Ça nous a pris 10 ans. Le 2 juin 2006, nous sommes finalement venus à une entente avec la province du Québec afin de pouvoir faciliter l'accès aux chantiers de la construction au Québec. Nous nous rappelons que les résidents du Québec avaient accès à l'Ontario, mais nous avions des restrictions pour se joindre au marché de la construction du Québec. Il faut se rappeler qu'au-delà de 10 000 travailleurs de la province du Québec venaient travailler en Ontario, mais nous avions environ 400 Ontariens au Québec.

Nous sommes venus à une entente le 2 juin 2006 lors d'une présentation avec le premier ministre Jean Charest et notre premier ministre, qui a travaillé très fort afin de résoudre ce problème. Du temps, nous avions comme ministre du Travail de l'Ontario l'honorable Steve Peters, qui est aujourd'hui le Président de la Chambre. Nous avons conclu des ententes qui ont pu vraiment satisfaire aux gens de la construction.

Mais aujourd'hui, nous voyons que nous devrions maintenant regarder à la grandeur du pays. Après tout, comme j'ai dit, nous sommes tous Canadiens. Pourquoi aurions-nous des restrictions pour aller d'une province à l'autre pour travailler?

0930

La fin de semaine dernière, avec mon collègue Dave Levac—nous avions aussi Peter Shurman, Bob Bailey, France Gélinas et Steve Peters—nous avons discuté, à la réunion de l'APOQ, l'Assemblée parlementaire Ontario-Québec, des points frontaliers. Laissez-moi vous dire que les discussions étaient très, très bonnes et je suis convaincu que nous allons avoir des suivis.

Mais laissez-moi vous dire que pour nous, les communautés longeant la frontière du Québec et aussi celle du Manitoba, nous avons plusieurs domaines. Ce document ici nous réfère à 60 métiers et professions dont nous aurons maintenant la mobilité d'une province à l'autre à travers le pays. Je sais qu'à date, seulement deux autres provinces ont déposé des projets de loi afin de venir à une entente avec toutes les autres provinces pour que nous puissions travailler n'importe où au Canada. Aujourd'hui nous avons la Colombie-Britannique qui a déposé un projet de loi le 12 mars 2009 et ensuite le Manitoba, qui a déposé un projet de loi le 21 avril.

Les choses vont très bien, mais nous, étant la première province du Canada—je suis fier de dire que je suis Ontarien—devons démontrer du vouloir. Et c'est pour ça qu'aujourd'hui on arrive avec ce projet de loi qui va bénéficier à tous les Ontariens aussi bien qu'aux Canadiens d'autres provinces. C'est très, très important.

Oui, le 2 juin nous avons signé cette entente. Nous rappelons aussi que le 10 septembre dernier, nous avons

eu une rencontre ici dans l'édifice de l'Assemblée législative avec une partie du cabinet du Québec et avec les membres du cabinet de l'Ontario pour discuter de la main-d'œuvre et aussi de l'échange de services.

Lorsqu'on est porté à blâmer les dépenses qui sont survenus pour le projet « eHealth », dont le vrai nom est les dossiers santé électroniques, laissez-moi vous dire que je suis un qui en a bénéficié à date, parce que mon dossier médical est déjà informatisé. Je l'ai appris lorsque je me suis rendu chez mon médecin. L'avantage de ça est, lorsque je veux demander à mon médecin de faciliter une chirurgie plus rapide—parfois nous avons des listes d'attente—il va communiquer avec un médecin du Québec sans difficulté. Nous venons à une entente. Cela survient très, très souvent avec les gens de ce que j'appelle souvent le « Far East », les régions de Hawkesbury, Sainte-Anne-de-Prescott. Je leur dis : « Pourquoi ne pas communiquer avec votre médecin afin d'avoir accès à un hôpital à Montréal, qui est à la porte de notre frontière? » Le tout fonctionne à merveille. Très souvent, mes commettants vont au Québec.

Maintenant, la construction, comme j'ai dit, se déroule très bien, mais nous avons d'autres difficultés qui longent vraiment les frontières lorsqu'arrive le temps de signaler 911. J'ai ici une lettre du ministre Rick Bartolucci qui est parvenue à l'honorable Jacques Dupuis, ministre de la Sécurité publique du Québec, concernant un problème qui survient très souvent aux frontières des autres provinces. Je vais vous donner un cas très simple. Le 4 août 2008, un accident entre une motocyclette et une auto est survenu dans ma région à Wendover au pont de Jessups Falls. Le passant a pris son téléphone cellulaire et a signalé 911; on a répondu à Montebello. Lorsque l'appel est entré à Montebello, ils ont dit : « La route régionale 17 n'est pas dans notre région. Voulez-vous appeler 677? » Ça ne fonctionne pas avec un téléphone cellulaire.

La jeune dame est décédée. Je ne dois pas dire que c'est dû au fait qu'on a eu de la difficulté à rejoindre quelqu'un, mais c'est quelque chose qu'on doit vraiment regarder afin de faciliter les discussions avec les autres provinces. La même chose survient le long des frontières du Manitoba.

Mais une autre chose aussi, c'est que lorsque nous utilisons le 911 ou notre téléphone cellulaire dans la région de Cornwall pour appeler à Toronto, l'appel passe par les États-Unis. C'est donc quelque chose qu'il faut regarder à l'intérieur de notre pays en premier lieu.

En fin de semaine, nous avons discuté de points très, très importants qui affectent la province. Nous perdons au-delà d'un milliard de dollars de revenue de taxe sur le tabac par année. Je regarde les statistiques qui nous ont été fournies à Québec, et puis je dois dire qu'en 1991, d'après la GRC, les pertes ontariennes étaient de l'ordre de 419 \$ millions. Mais laissez-moi vous dire qu'aujourd'hui, avec cette entente, nous pouvons continuer à poursuivre des démarches pour des arrestations en travaillant aussi bien avec la Sûreté provinciale du Québec et la Police provinciale de l'Ontario et la Gendarmerie royale du Canada.

Actuellement, comme j'ai déjà expliqué—je disais à Point-au-Chêne; c'est plutôt Pointe Fortune. Dans ma région, le long des frontières, lorsque la police veut poursuivre une enquête, elle doit arrêter aux lignes. Comme les policiers me disaient, « Lorsque je traverse le pont du Long-Sault à Hawkesbury, je devrais jeter mon arme à la rivière. » Puis j'ai des maisons, vraiment, qui sont sur les frontières, telles que celles du Pointe Fortune et Chute-à-Blondeau; la personne couche au Québec et prend son repas en Ontario. J'ai été visité après en avoir discuté quelques semaines passées, et il y avait un autre endroit qui était dans le bout de Saint-Eugène qui est semblable.

On parle de sécurité, mais aujourd'hui lorsqu'on regarde tous les métiers ou les professions qui vont pouvoir bénéficier, j'ai trouvé cela très, très intéressant. Tout d'abord, la partie 1, l'interprétation, qui est très important—je pourrais appeler cela un projet de loi omnibus—couvre 60 différents métiers et professions. Je ne vais en nommer que quelques-uns : je regarde la loi intitulée « Association of Registered Graphic Designers of Ontario Act »; nous avons the Ontario Association of Certified Engineering—that is a very important trade—and the Ontario Building Officials Association Act, just to name a few. There are 60 of them in there, and I believe it's a good start.

As I said, that came out of a meeting when all the Premiers met a few months ago to discuss this very important issue. Today, this is exactly what we are doing, and we have to congratulate Premier Dalton McGuinty for having asked the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to come up with Bill 175, which will be a great help for all Ontarians and for all Canadians.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to add comments to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. Unfortunately, I don't speak French, so I missed most of what he was talking about, but we are certainly interested in Bill 175, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act.

In theory, our party is in favour of labour mobility. I think this is the kind of bill where there are a lot of different groups out there that will have an interest in it. So far, to be honest, we haven't heard too much from any of them, although I had a meeting with the certified general accountants the other day, who also said they're in favour of labour mobility, but mentioned that they're excluded in this bill; there's some provision that excludes them in the bill. So they weren't really very happy about that.

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I also note that historically, Ontario has probably had the most challenges with labour mobility between Ontario and Quebec, where often Quebec restricts our labour from working in the province of Quebec, whereas we've—most of the time—had fairly open doors. So this bill does not affect Quebec, as far as I understand, and I would say that's certainly a problem.

But this is a bill that definitely would benefit from committee hearings, so we will look forward to extensive

committee hearings. I hope it's publicized in a way that all those who would be interested in making comments and suggesting improvements or changes to it will have an opportunity to do so. I shall look forward to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I listened intently to the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell, and the problem is, there are already rules in place. For instance, let's take the nursing profession: If I'm not mistaken, they come up to Canada on a regular basis recruiting our nurses and doctors to go to the States. Their qualifications are more than welcome in the United States and anywhere else in the world.

It's not about whether it's mobile or not; it's about the qualifications. If someone is practising a trade or profession in Nova Scotia—and their standards are lower than ours—and they come to the province, the province simply is saying, "Raise those standards so that person can be competent in the province of Ontario." If our standards are the highest in Canada, so be it. That's better for the public, it's better for safety, and it's better for people in general.

I fail to see the relationship between the medical profession and this bill. If you are a qualified doctor in Canada, you can practise anywhere in Canada. If you come from another country and you may fall short in one area, you can be trained up to the level in a local hospital to get that thing that you need.

The thing is, it has been protectionism. It has been the old boys' clubs that have stopped people being hired. It's not about qualifications; it's about the old boys' clubs in every profession protecting their turf and territory, and that's why some of these people from foreign countries and other provinces have trouble getting in.

So with all due respect, there are a lot of things that if you make—I'm a welder in Ontario and I can weld anywhere in Canada. So I don't understand what the barriers are that they say are so big. They're not so big. It's because we have a high standard in Ontario, and when people come here, we expect them to be able to meet that standard. And that's basically, I think, a good thing.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I want to also weigh in on this discussion, and I want to first of all commend the member from Glengarry–Prescott–Russell. He certainly is very familiar with the issues that have been very predominant in the construction industry, especially as mobility of labour goes from Quebec to Ontario and back.

It's ironic in many ways that we have freer movement of labour—and of many things—internationally than we have interprovincially. That's where the agreement on interprovincial trade and internal trade is so important, because these are issues that we haven't been able to wrestle to the ground yet. It certainly has required of many people a bit of research to find out if they're able to practise their trade in a different province.

As was pointed out earlier, in some cases even a doctor moving interprovincially has to go past the College of Physicians and Surgeons in order to do that. I know that, because as a former chair of a hospital board, we had recruited a doctor from Newfoundland. We did finally get him into Ontario, but the board had to wait while that doctor went through the college to be able to qualify to practise in Ontario.

It made absolutely no sense. We had a doctor shortage in Strathroy; we needed the doctor to come. He was Canadian, he was trained in Canada and yet we still had to get him through the whole issue of moving interprovincially in order to have him to come to the community. It was crazy, because we could have gotten a foreign-trained doctor easier than we could get a doctor from another province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Seeing none, the honourable member for Glengarry—Prescott—Russell has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I just want to make sure that everybody has a chance to read Bill 175; it consists of 37 pages. But let me tell you that accountants are part of it. Section 8 covers the accountants of Ontario.

There's another point that is very important for border communities, like in my case and also on the Manitoba-Ontario border. We have doctors and nurses practising on both sides, and we know the experience we have gone through. The doctors like to come to work in Ontario, and since 2005, over 1,900 new doctors have received licences in Ontario and we have created 852 spaces in university.

Let me tell you also that item 25 would definitely be of interest to my dear friend from Haliburton—Kawartha Lakes—Brock, because in there they even recognize musicians and instructors in music—we know that our member from that sector is a good musician. So it does cover a lot of areas, and we will benefit from this. Let's hope that the three parties will recognize the work that has been done through negotiations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I'm pleased to be able to take part in this debate, coming from a border community as I do, and representing a constituency that everywhere borders the province of Manitoba.

People who live in the constituency of Kenora—Rainy River have much experience with what this bill purports to be about. I want to say to all those tradespeople who used to work in the paper mill in Kenora and the paper mill in Dryden and the sawmill in Kenora and the sawmill in Sioux Lookout and the sawmill in Ear Falls; and to all those people who used to work on the nine paper machines in Thunder Bay that are now closed down, and who used to work at the pulp mill in Thunder Bay that is now closed down, and who used to work on the Red Rock paper machines—two of them are now closed down—and the plywood mill in Nipigon and the waferboard mill in Longlac and the particleboard mill in Long-

lac and the sawmill in Longlac and the sawmill in Nakina and the two pulp mills in Terrace Bay and the pulp mill in Marathon and the sawmill in Dubreuilville—all of you who are now working in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia—this government wants you to believe that you're not doing that.

I see you just about every weekend, either in the airport in Thunder Bay or the airport in Winnipeg, getting ready to fly off to Saskatoon or Calgary or Edmonton or Fort McMurray or Fort St. John, British Columbia. This government wants you to believe that that's not happening, that there are these huge barriers to interprovincial employment and you're not actually working in Manitoba, you're not actually working in Saskatchewan, you're not actually working in Alberta and you're not actually working in British Columbia. Honestly, what this government says from time to time really does test the limits of reality.

But it's not just those people who are all working outside Ontario. All those nurses who went to Red River College in Winnipeg, who went to the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, who went to the University of Winnipeg in Winnipeg and went to Brandon University in Brandon, who are now working in Red Lake, in Kenora, in Rainy River, in Fort Frances, in Atikokan, in Sioux Lookout, in Dryden and in Thunder Bay—the McGuinty government wants you to believe that what you're doing is not real; it's not possible for you to be trained in Manitoba and come and work in Ontario.

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All those nurses who were trained in Manitoba and worked in Kenora for a while and in Fort Frances for a while and in Dryden for a while and in Thunder Bay for a while and then went back to Manitoba to work—the McGuinty government wants you to believe that you're not real either; that that didn't happen. All those physicians who work at the hospital and at the health centre in Kenora and at the First Nations health centre and at the hospital and the clinic in Fort Frances and who work in Red Lake and in Dryden and in Sioux Lookout and in Thunder Bay—the McGuinty government wants you to believe that you're not real either; that this isn't happening.

All those electricians who are now getting ready to head up to northern Manitoba to work on the power projects there, and the cement workers, the steel and iron workers, the millwrights, machinists, welders and carpenters who are getting ready to head up to northern Manitoba to work on those very significant construction projects—the McGuinty Liberals want you to believe that what you're doing is not real; it ain't happening.

Labour mobility exists incredibly in Canada. It exists. And do you know what? It has existed for a long time.

If the McGuinty Liberals choose to ignore the reality of this in Ontario, take a vacation in Newfoundland and talk to all the Newfoundlanders who do three weeks in Fort McMurray and two weeks back to Newfoundland, who do three weeks in Edmonton and back to Newfoundland, who do three weeks in the gas fields in northern BC

and back to Newfoundland, who do three weeks in Yellowknife or elsewhere in the mining developments in the Northwest Territories and then back to Newfoundland.

But you don't have to even go to Newfoundland. You can go to Windsor, where the mayor, just six short months ago, was asking WestJet to implement a direct flight from Windsor, Ontario, to Fort McMurray, Alberta, so that all those people who have been laid off in the car plants in Windsor could get a direct flight to Fort McMurray, work there and yet retain their residence in Windsor. The McGuinty Liberals want you to believe that that's not happening either. But all these things are happening. They happen every day, they happen every week, they happen every month and they've been happening every year for a long, long time.

Are there differences in certification? Yes, there are. Any person going to trade school in Ontario knows that you can apply for a provincial ticket and you can apply for an interprovincial ticket. If all you want to do is work in Ontario, you can complete the apprenticeship and your work at the community college and apply for a provincial certificate. But if you want to work in Manitoba, Alberta, Saskatchewan or British Columbia, then you know up front that you want to qualify for the interprovincial ticket.

My nephew graduated from community college just a couple of years ago, completed his apprenticeship in Ontario, wrote his exam for his provincial ticket and then wrote his exam for his interprovincial ticket. Two weeks later, he got a call from a plumbing contractor in Whistler, BC, who said, "People who own a shed want to turn it into a one-bedroom apartment in preparation for the Olympics. People who own a garage, a basement, an attic all want to put in a shower and a toilet and turn it into a one-bedroom apartment. Come out to Whistler, and I promise you that you'll work 12 hours a day, seven days a week. You can pay off your Ontario student loan."

He had no trouble going to British Columbia. He recognized that he had to get his interprovincial ticket, and he wrote that as he was going through the apprenticeship program. But the McGuinty Liberals want you to believe that's not happening. It is happening. It happens every day, every week, every month, every year, and has been for a number of years.

So what is this really all about? What it's really all about is this: It's really not about labour mobility; it is about eroding things like health and safety standards, it's about eroding things like labour standards and it's about eroding things like training standards. It's about the race to the bottom. What this kind of legislation does is—it doesn't say it, but the effect is immediately to create a race to the bottom.

One of the problems we've got in Ontario—this government should be embarrassed to bring this legislation forth at this time—is we've had a number of private colleges out there handing out bogus diplomas and bogus training certificates. If this government can't regulate that in Ontario—I love the excuse of the minister. It's the

regular McGuinty excuse whenever they get caught doing something: "I saw nothing, I heard nothing, I knew nothing, and I wasn't smart enough to ask any questions," when bogus diplomas, bogus training certificates were being handed out by fly-by-night community colleges and fly-by-night training organizations.

I say to the McGuinty Liberals, if you aren't awake enough at the switch to stop this kind of bogus activity in Ontario, how do you think you're going to stop it if somebody presents with a certificate or diploma from a private institution somewhere else that isn't regulated in that other province? How are you going to do it? Are you going to say once again, "We saw nothing, we heard nothing, we knew nothing and we weren't smart enough to ask any questions"? Is that what's going to happen?

These requirements that we have in place—health and safety requirements—didn't just appear out of the sky one day. We have them because people died in workplaces, because people were seriously injured. We have them because there were coroners' reports that said over and over again that you must put these requirements in place to protect not only the health and safety of workers but protect the health and safety of the public.

There are provinces in this country, I regret to say, where the attitude toward early childhood education is, "You don't need much training"; they use words like, "Early childhood education is just glorified babysitting." So you have, unfortunately, people getting certificates in early childhood education that have very little to them in substance.

Thankfully, in Ontario, we have started to recognize—although we still have too many unregulated child care centres in this province—that early childhood education matters, it counts, and that early childhood educators should have a certain level of training, education, experience and certification.

This legislation would create a huge hole in that. Somebody could present with a certificate from I-don't-know-what training institute, with very little in the way of course substance or course content or very little in terms of experience or training, and say, "Well, I'm qualified."

I say again: If the McGuinty Liberals can't even properly regulate bogus training in this province, where students were ripped off to the tune of several thousand dollars and got a certificate that was meaningless, with this legislation in place, what are you going to do with somebody who presents a certificate from a training body that you've never heard of in another province and that you have no control over, but who says, "I'm licensed, I've got a certificate for early childhood education"?

This is not about protecting the public; this is not about labour mobility; this is about promoting the race to the bottom, and there are powerful forces out there who want to see a race to the bottom. They want to see a race to the bottom in environmental standards, they want to see a race to the bottom in health and safety standards, they want to see a race to the bottom in minimum wage and they want to see a race to the bottom in labour stan-

dards. They think this kind of deregulation is the way to heaven. In fact, I can refer you to many of George Bush's speeches over the last eight years where he basically said that if we deregulate and if we basically open it up, things will be wonderful. That's what he did with the US financial system: deregulate it and basically allow anybody to offer anything without any proof of the validity and the substance—and he said it would be heaven.

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I want to ask you: Do you think that the state of the American economy today is heaven? Ask all of those pensioners, all of those workers, all of those investors who put their money into this totally deregulated race-to-the-bottom system that was created in the United States. Ask them if they're better off today. Ask them if that system works. Ask them if it works that somebody can offer a financial product from country X and market it in country Y as being a grade A security because you are not allowed to question what went on in the other jurisdiction; you're not allowed to ask questions about the substance or the integrity. Ask them if that has led to honesty, openness, transparency and protection of the public. Ask them. No, you're afraid to ask them because you know the answer. You know the answer: It was and continues to be a financial disaster that has affected hundreds of millions of people around the world, where all sorts of illegal, shady conduct went on.

But that's what's happening here, I say to you, because I see it all the time: a student from Ontario from a high school in my riding goes to the University of Manitoba, gets a medical degree, passes the requirements and is allowed to come back to Ontario and practise medicine. Why? Because they've met the Canadian standard. All kinds of times, nurses who grew up in the north end of Winnipeg in poor communities go to Red River College in Winnipeg. They complete the diploma; they complete the practicum; they are recognized as nurses in Manitoba. They come to hospitals and community agencies in Ontario and they work. Why? Because they've met the standard that all of us in Canada recognize.

Don't try to pass off this which is in the interest of those people who want to deregulate the economy, who want to take away from municipalities the capacity to promote local economic development—don't try to pass this off as labour mobility. Labour mobility is incredible in Canada, and to the extent that there have been problems, most of those have been ironed out in the last 10 years. This is about creating the same kind of deregulated environment for investment and for those who want to see the race to the bottom that we just saw happen in the United States. Don't try to pass it off as anything else.

Steven Shrybman, who is a pretty good lawyer, has written a legal opinion. He has looked at this bill, and I just want to conclude some of the things that he says:

"There is no demonstrable rationale or need for Bill 175 as virtually all significant labour mobility issues have been successfully addressed over recent years through interprovincial co-operation and other voluntary initiatives such as the red seal program for skilled trades.

"Requiring regulators to recognize occupational certificates given in other provinces with more modest standards will create pressure for them to reduce their own standards to a lower common denominator." George Bush—deregulate; open it up; let it all go to the lowest common denominator—the race to the bottom. And what happens? Americans will tell you what happens. "The requirement for regulatory authorities to harmonize their standards with those of other jurisdictions will add to this pressure", the pressure to lower standards.

"Bill 175 has and will continue to impose significant resource demands on Ontario ministries and regulatory authorities that must now make informed judgments about the efficacy of occupational certification standards and practices in other provinces and justify any higher-standard requirements they wish to maintain and apply to all those seeking occupational certifications in Ontario."

Pressure to lower standards: health and safety standards, environmental standards, labour standards—all those things that I think a civilized society would want to promote and sustain.

"Under Bill 175, municipalities and regulatory authorities such as the college of nurses and the association of early childhood educators are exposed to monetary sanctions as high as \$5 million" when they do reject some individual or some applicant who they believe has substandard certification—again, the pressure for the race to the bottom.

"Bill 175 will do nothing to enhance the competence, skill, or integrity of Ontario tradespersons and professionals and is in fact likely to have the opposite effect. By ensuring certifications to those trained to a lower standard, Bill 175 will unnecessarily put at risk public safety and the health and well-being of Ontarians. The mobility scheme that would be established by the bill is also likely to undermine the quality of a myriad of services offered by teachers, health care professionals, accountants, taxi drivers, and" all kinds of "other skilled workers and professionals."

I wonder if the government has any legal analyses, a legal opinion, to support the nonsense that it has been saying about labour mobility in Ontario, labour mobility in Canada, labour mobility that exists every day, every week, every month and has existed for many years.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate and to pass comment on the remarks we've just heard from the member from Kenora-Rainy River. Most of the remarks that I heard, while perhaps interesting and entertaining, were completely irrelevant to the purpose of this bill.

The intent of this bill, as those members of the House who have read the bill and understand the bill will know, will affect about 80 regulatory authorities and about 300 occupations. Some of the people who will be affected in a positive way under this bill will be nurses, teachers, architects, engineers, mechanics and many of the skilled trades.

The intent of this bill is to give greater freedoms to the people in our province and other provinces to be able to practise their skill or profession in other areas of the country.

When you talk about creating sinister scenarios, lower standards and risk to the public—they're completely unsubstantiated. What is substantiated is that by the passage of this bill and this legislation, Ontario will become a much more competitive economy, our country will be able to compete in a much more competitive way, and that is good for the working people of this province and this country.

We need to get back to the discussions that would actually perhaps improve this bill. If there are things that could be done to improve this bill, I think we'd be all ears for that.

Providing full labour mobility for these professions and trades we're talking about today is simply going to strengthen the competitiveness and productivity of our province. It's going to help industries address what we certainly see today, and that is changing labour market conditions.

To go off on a tangent, I think, does not do justice to the bill. I think there is obviously some room for debate on the bill, but to use scaremongering tactics on a bill like this is completely unnecessary. I'd ask all members of the House to keep that in mind and support the bill when the time comes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norm Miller: I'm pleased to make some comments on the speech from the member from Kenora-Rainy River on Bill 175, the Ontario Labour Mobility Act, 2009. Certainly, he brought up some issues to do with the north and the huge loss of jobs in the forestry sector that we've seen in the last number of years. Of course, we've also seen a huge loss of jobs in the manufacturing sector in the province of Ontario. This bill is about labour mobility. Unfortunately, what we've seen in recent years is people moving out of the province in search of jobs, and it has just been getting worse.

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Of course, we heard last week that the government is on the path for a record deficit of \$25 billion. They're accumulating \$2.8 million in new debt every single hour of the day. To this point, the McGuinty government has added \$13,500 per household of debt for the families in the province of Ontario.

We see lots of other problems that are restricting industry and growth in this province. In terms of this particular bill, the member talked about a Canadian standard—not in a positive way. I would say that our party is in favour, in theory, of labour mobility, and there's certainly some sense to having a Canadian standard, as long as that standard is set at a high enough standard that makes sense, so that you can then work anywhere in the country.

As I previously mentioned, this is a piece of legislation that a lot of people will have comments on. We

will be looking for extensive public hearings so that those people that are interested will have an opportunity to make comment to the bill and to improve the bill, and we shall look forward to that.

But there's no doubt that the problem we have in this province right now is people moving out of the province in search of work. We need to create those opportunities here in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to commend the member from Kenora-Rainy River for his factual—actually, reality; what's going on out there. I don't believe the government is really watching.

It really stunned me what the member from Oakville was saying about nurses. My youngest is graduating in four months from nursing and already the recruiters are circling the colleges and universities to recruit nurses for the States, for Texas, for all over Canada. I don't know what you're talking about, that mobility isn't there already. Twenty-five years ago, I was recruited to go to Labrador City in Labrador to be a welder in an iron ore mill, but I didn't take it. That was 25 years ago. There's no mobility? I don't know what they're talking about. There's been mobility for decades.

Do you know that our doctors, nurses and welders in Ontario have high standards that are in demand all over the world? They're in demand in the States. They come up from Texas to recruit us, from Louisiana to recruit us. If that isn't mobility, I don't know what is; and that's been there for 30, 40 years.

This is just a bill that they're bringing forward to keep some of their supporters quiet. That's all this is. It's got nothing to do with what has been going on. They've had their heads in the sand for 40 years because, I'll tell you, mobility has been around for a long, long time. It always will be and always has been. I don't really know what this is all about.

Laughter.

Mr. Paul Miller: The member from Rainy River is absolutely correct. If you want to lower the standards—laugh and lower the standards—go ahead, because that's where you're headed. You're on a race to the bottom to lower the standards for North America. Thank you very much, McGuinty government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions or comments?

Mr. Jeff Leal: I just want to reply. I listened carefully to the comments from the member from Kenora-Rainy River and did have the opportunity in August to visit Sandy Lake, Moose Factory, Moosonee and Sioux Lookout.

This issue was brought to my attention, certainly in detail, by my colleague the member from Glengarry-Prescott-Russell. The example that he used with regard to a problem was when the Museum of Civilization was built in Hull. He brought to my attention, in detail, the fact that there were all these skilled people that were living in eastern Ontario who were effectively barred

from working on major federal government projects that were in the province of Quebec—part of the national capital region, but on the province of Quebec side. Mr. Lalonde clearly documented electricians, design people and other skilled trades that were indeed prohibited from working on these major projects, particularly in Hull, Quebec. He was eloquent this morning when he made his comments on the necessity of why the provisions of this legislation, Bill 175, would allow for many of those skilled individuals, particularly in his part of Ontario, to make sure that they would get a fair chance for an opportunity to work, particularly in the province of Quebec.

I essentially agree with the member from Kenora—Rainy River. I know that GE in Peterborough, over the years, have dispatched many of their people working in projects when they were setting up hydro-electric generation plants in British Columbia, Newfoundland and Labrador, Manitoba and other areas. They would certainly take their skills to do a lot of these set-up projects that would last for many months. But Mr. Lalonde clearly demonstrated where this legislation would help in his particular—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

The honourable member from Kenora—Rainy River has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I do want to respond, and I want to say to the member from Peterborough, that the reality is that Quebec, for good reasons, has chosen to establish their construction industry, such that there is in Quebec a drive towards unionization, training, and health and safety standards for their construction industry. If what you're suggesting is that you want to make it easier for non-unionized firms in the construction industry to operate, then I suggest that the McGuinty Liberals come out and say that. If that's what this is really about, to pave the way for non-unionization, for non-unionized construction workers and for non-unionized construction firms, then have the honesty to say that.

I ask the question: Do the McGuinty Liberals have a legal analysis, a legal opinion, to support their position? I don't think they do. I want to get from Liberal members: What is the motivation for this? Because there is absolutely no evidence that labour mobility is a problem. Canada is an open and free country. Ontario is an open and free province. People are free to move and live wherever they want in this country to work, and they do it all the time. Labour mobility is not the issue. What the issue is is this: We currently have a Prime Minister who believes, ideologically, in deregulation—and he has been very clear in that—and in the Agreement on Internal Trade. That agreement reflects an ideological commitment by the Harper government to reduce the role of government in regulating the economy. The question is, why are the McGuinty Liberals signed on to this full force?

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being past 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30 a.m., at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1018 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Joe Dickson: Today is page captain Rebecca Briell's day here in the Legislature. Rebecca is from Lester B. Pearson Public School in our riding of Ajax—Pickering. Lester B. Pearson is in Ajax.

Please join me in welcoming her parents, Julian and Sandra, and grandparents Gary and Anna to the Legislature today. Of course, Rebecca's beautiful sister is here with them.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I'm very pleased to welcome to Queen's Park an outstanding constituent of York South—Weston, Mark DeMontis, who is here today in the company of Bonnie Taylor.

Mark is the founder of Courage Canada, and he has skated all the way from Toronto to Vancouver to raise funds for blind youth. He has just returned to Toronto. Please join me in welcoming him to Queen's Park.

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I'd like to welcome one of our fine interns—one of 10 interns we have—in the members' gallery. It's Maegan Baird. She is from Wel-land, Ontario, and a graduate of McMaster University.

Let me tell you, she is the fourth intern that I'm getting, and we have the best.

Hon. John Milloy: I know all members will want to join me in welcoming Nathan Coschi and Shirley Halme, from my community, who are in the gallery today to join us at Queen's Park.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Bramalea—Gore—Malton and page Timothy Choi, we'd like to welcome his mother, Samantha, his father, Brian, his grandmother Wha Sook Choi and his grandfather Jason Choi to the public galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: My question is to the finance minister. Yesterday, Minister Duncan said the sole-source deal he handed to H.H. Angus to operate the Windsor Energy Centre was “a temporary arrangement ... to facilitate keeping the lights on.”

I've looked at the Premier's July 20 news release and it doesn't say when this government's pledge to end sole-source contracts may be set aside.

Has a list of excuses for breaking the Premier's word been made available to the public?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, there is a commercial dispute going on between the OLG and the private company involved. The matter is before the courts. It's inappropriate for me to comment on the details of that dispute beyond what I have said in the House before.

Again, this government is committed to openness, to transparency. We have changed the spending practices that governments over the years and across political par-

ties have pursued in the context of how the government itself does business.

As I say, with respect to the energy centre at Casino Windsor, it is a matter before the courts. There is a dispute. We won an injunction, which allowed that centre to stay open. My understanding is, the arrangement which was done by the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: I'm not asking about a commercial dispute. The news release issued by the Premier does not qualify the ban on untendered contracts. In fact, the very first highlight of the changes listed is, "All new Ontario government consulting contracts must follow a competitive hiring process, regardless of dollar value." But Minister Duncan and the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. have managed to sign off on at least two gigantic sole-source contracts since the Premier said there would be no more sole-source deals. Minister Duncan gave lame excuses in both instances. How many excuses are there, Minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In terms of the situation that involved that specific contract, I do know that steps were taken well in advance of the new policy to provide for the emergency operation of that energy centre in the event that the legal dispute, which, as I say, is before the courts, got to a point where they would potentially not be producing the energy that was needed. It may in fact be that that was signed well in advance of the new policy as part of a response that would be dependent on actions that would be taken by the courts.

As the member opposite knows, OLG did win an injunction to keep—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: When the new rules came in, Minister Takhar said, "Taxpayers deserve to know that their money is being spent properly. The new rules make ministries and agencies more transparent and accountable." He didn't say "some ministries and some agencies"; he said it applies to all ministries and agencies. He promised transparency and accountability. Perhaps integrity czar Takhar needs to have a little chat with Minister Duncan.

Minister, your conduct shows that you don't believe that the Premier's edict applies to you, but hopefully you still understand what transparency means. Just how many other sole-source deals have you handed out since the promise that these untendered contracts would stop?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Again, the contract in question was done prior to the new policy. It was done as part of a plan to ensure continuing operation. I'm sure the member would want the public to know that a competitive bid is now under way for the permanent operator of that facility.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. Peter Shurman: Again to the Minister of Finance: Back when you made a big show of firing Kelly

McDougald, you called the Windsor Energy Centre a boil to be lanced. It was constructed in a rush. You didn't bother to tell Ontarians they were on the hook for an additional \$80 million for a project in your riding, and—this just in—we now find out the generators at the Windsor Energy Centre have never produced any power. It seems that you spent \$80 million to build a giant air conditioner and that this is not a temporary arrangement to keep the lights on at all. Can you tell us, Minister: Does the Windsor Energy Centre work?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I would refer the member to public accounts, and I would say that in fact there were, and continue to be, challenges at OLG. I acknowledge that. We want to ensure that all of our crown agencies are operating at maximum efficiency. When things don't go as well as we would like, we take steps to ensure that the public trust is maintained.

The member will see in public accounts the disclosures of these various expenditures. They're there and they've been there. I think they were disclosed in 2006, I say to the member opposite. We have an interim board operating the OLG, and I am in the process of getting a permanent board to ensure that those important sources of revenue continue to operate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Peter Shurman: Maybe we can get a briefing on the Windsor Energy Centre, and the minister could attend.

What's the point of promising to stop untendered contracts if you're not going to do it? It looks like Minister Duncan couldn't wait to sidestep the rules. At the very time we were debating new legislation to support the McGuinty Liberals' promise, Dwight Duncan and OLG signed not one but two untendered contracts. The RFP drafts prove that what he said about needing to do the Casino Niagara deal with Bob Lopinski is wrong. The fact that the energy centre in Windsor hasn't even been commissioned proves that what he said about needing to do the \$15,000-a-day deal with Angus is wrong. How do you explain such a calamity of incompetence to taxpayers? Minister, why do all your excuses end up being wrong?

1040

Hon. Dwight Duncan: In 1996, the then-government of the day signed a lease with Casino Niagara. There were three-month renewals when the lease expired, and there were a number of them signed between 2001 and 2002, similar to what we did, which the member has called—I apologize; I couldn't hear over the din. I think he talked about incompetence.

The signature on those three renewals was one Tim Hudak, and I think the member may not want to be casting such aspersions on the talents of his leader.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Peter Shurman: I would just like to recap the facts here. Minister Duncan—no one else—planned to spend \$400 million on the casino expansion, and went over budget. He planned to spend \$50 million for an

energy centre and he went over budget. He has claimed that it was necessary to sole-source a contract to keep “the lights on”—your words—but the \$80-million energy centre hasn’t produced any power. You signed off on an untendered contract for no reason. You’ve made a mockery of the Premier’s word that the McGuinty Liberals were done with these sole-source deals.

Signing off on sole-source contracts was the firing offence that led David Caplan to resign. What will you do, minister?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I believe that the government Mr. Hudak was part of signed those renewals at Casino Niagara on—I’m going to confirm the number—seven or eight separate occasions. Mr. Hudak himself was the signatory. They did so—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Order. Stop the clock.

You have 10 seconds, minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: And so Mr. Hudak did in fact on three occasions sign those renewals. Unlike the member opposite, I thought that was the appropriate thing to do at the time. I thought Mr. Hudak acted appropriately, and we will continue to act appropriately on the file.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Health. Ontario families, particularly parents of young children, are very, very anxious about extremely long waits to get the H1N1 flu shots. They’ve been told to get their children immunized and to do it at the earliest opportunity, but when they try to do exactly that, the line-ups stretch endlessly. Dr. Allison McGeer of Toronto’s Mount Sinai Hospital says, “We clearly did not think carefully enough about how to make the whole vaccine delivery system work.”

What is the government’s plan to provide immediate relief to families who are waiting hours and hours, even days, for flu shots?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member for the question. I know that all members in this House are working together to make sure that we respond appropriately to the H1N1 pandemic. I want to tell the member that she does not need to wait for question period. Anytime you’re interested in information, my office will make that available to you.

I’m a mom; I’m a grandma; I acknowledge the anxiety that parents are feeling, but I do want to reassure everyone in the province that we have ordered enough vaccine for everyone who needs it and wants it. We have now received 2.1 million doses of vaccine. Thousands of people have been vaccinated already. We’re a week ahead of schedule. Mount Sinai Hospital alone has vaccinated 4,000 people. We’re getting the vaccine out as quickly as possible.

I will continue in my supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I appreciate the minister’s offer. In fact, part of question period is informing the

broader public as well, which this government seems to have a bit of a problem with.

The situation will likely get worse, as we know, over the weekend and into next week. This morning, we’re getting reports of long lineups at new clinics. New clinic locations are seeing very, very high demand. Some describe the scene at some of these locations as “chaotic and confusing.”

How is the government tracking and reducing wait times at vaccination clinics currently? What is it going to do to reassure Ontarians that they will, in fact, be able to access the vaccinations in a timely way?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am pleased that so many people have decided that they do want to take the vaccine, that they are taking their children to clinics.

Our local public health units across the province are responding in real time to the increased demand. They’re implementing their plans to get the vaccinations into as many people as quickly as they possibly can.

As I said, we will have more than enough vaccine for everyone who needs it and wants it. The public health units are responding. They are increasing the number of clinics. They are expanding the hours the clinics are open.

I spoke to Dr. King late last night and I told her that if there was anything we could do to help get more people vaccinated more quickly, we were prepared to respond to that request.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There’s a domino effect here, and we’re already beginning to see it. A cumbersome vaccination process will lead to higher rates of infection—and that’s already putting an incredible strain on emergency rooms across the province. It has also taken a toll, as everyone knows, on the Telehealth phone hotline, where some callers are actually being made to wait up to seven hours to speak to qualified medical personnel.

What resources is the minister prepared to commit to ensure that worried Ontarians have quick access to H1N1 medical advice in person, as well as through the Telehealth network?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is right; there has been a dramatic increase in the number of calls to Telehealth. In fact, they’re experiencing five times higher than normal volume. We have responded. We have increased the number of nurses by over 400 hours to try to respond as quickly as we can. We’re also training more people to try to ease that burden.

I do recommend to people, though, that they go to the website ontario.ca/flu. We have put on the website a self-evaluation tool, where people can go through a questionnaire and take the steps that are recommended on that website.

EXECUTIVE COMPENSATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is also to the Minister of Health. We see how important our health care

system is when it is put to the test, like right now. We need to be spending every single health dollar wisely. Yesterday, at the public accounts committee, MPPs from the governing party voted to stop the auditor from looking into executive compensation in the health sector. Does this minister think that was appropriate?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: My understanding is that public accounts has invited members of the ministry and members of eHealth to return to public accounts so that they can continue to ask and answer the questions that members of this House have. I think that's the appropriate step to be taking, and I encourage members of the committee to ask the questions that their constituents would expect answers to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families in Ontario are starting to see health care cuts already: ER closures in Port Colborne and Fort Erie, plans to cut 37 nurses at the Sudbury Regional Hospital, and 69 beds and 79 staff gone at Quinte health centre. If people in these communities are being asked to make sacrifices, shouldn't we at least consider whether we've done all we can to curb executive salaries?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to take exception to the premise of the question. Services in health are not being cut in this province. In fact, we are significantly expanding health care coverage. Whether it's access to primary care, whether it's shorter wait times for important procedures, health care is significantly better now than it was when we took office in 2003. By any measure you can use, health care is better. We've increased spending. We've increased access to primary care. We've dramatically shortened wait times. Health care is significantly better than it has been since we were elected.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It might work for the Liberal backbenchers, but it doesn't work for the people of Ontario. They know when their hospitals are closing, when their emergency wards are closing and when beds are closing in their communities.

This week more than ever, people are thinking about how important their health care system is to them. The Premier says that cuts are coming, but in communities across Ontario, the cuts are already here. People who are losing their emergency rooms and seeing nurses fired expect to see some balance from this government.

Why is the government unwilling to even consider some of the sky-high salaries of compensation with executives in our health care system?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The notion that health services are being reduced is simply erroneous. I would urge members of the public and members of this Legislature to actually go to the Ministry of Health website, where they can for themselves track the improvements we've made in wait times by procedure, by hospital. They can explore that website and they will see for themselves—they don't have to take it from me—how we have made targeted investments that have resulted in real

improvements for health care for the people in this province.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Health as well. Yesterday, at the public accounts committee, the members for Peterborough, Ottawa—Orléans, Timiskaming—Cochrane, Willowdale and Guelph voted to block Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson from giving evidence about the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle. My question is this: Who ordered Jeff Leal, Phil McNeely, David Ramsay, David Zimmer and Liz Sandals to block Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson from coming forward to tell us what they know?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said in the earlier question, which seems quite similar to this one, members of the ministry, employees of the ministry and eHealth have been called before the committee. They will come; they will respond to all of the questions that are being asked by members of the Legislature. That's the right process. I know they will provide answers to the questions that members in this Legislature have.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: The vote by the McGuinty Liberals to block Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson's evidence is proof that we need an independent public inquiry to get to the bottom of this billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle.

Ms. Kramer and Dr. Hudson are the most important witnesses as to what went wrong and which consultants benefited from their Liberal connections. The McGuinty Liberals must come clean. Why are they trying to silence the two people who know how these deals were done, by whom, and any information that should be given to the police?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, I applaud the members of the public accounts committee for exploring this issue, but I also ask that they explore and actually read the Auditor General's report. If they were to actually read the report, they would see that we have made significant improvements. We have come a long, long way in getting eHealth on the road.

I am absolutely committed to continue with the plan to get eHealth records. It's critically important to the sustainability of our health care system as we move forward.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My question is to the Deputy Premier. Mr. Chen is a shopkeeper in downtown Toronto doing his best to run an honest business—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. We have a format where a member asks a question and a minister responds to a question. If two members have a question or want to debate an issue, take it outside.

The member from Trinity—Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: David Chen is a shopkeeper in downtown Toronto doing his best to run an honest

business to support his family and to contribute to his community. Mr. Chen confronted a known shoplifter back in May. He and his two coworkers apprehended and detained the thief and waited for the police to come. The result: The thief gets a reduced sentence for testifying against Mr. Chen and Mr. Chen gets charged with committing a crime.

How do the charges against Mr. Chen serve the public interest?

Hon. George Smitherman: I'd have to say on this matter—which, of course, I've followed with significant interest in the media—that I have two very distinct disadvantages, beyond all of those others that are well-known. The first is that this matter is before the courts, and also that the minister who would be more familiar with the exact circumstances isn't available today. I will impress upon him that you've asked this question and ask him to endeavour to speak with you on whatever matters are appropriately discussed in the public domain, given the circumstances that it is before the courts.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Deputy Premier, I understand what you said, and I just wanted to tell you that Mr. Chen is here in the gallery with many of the small business folks that are here.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, sir, for sitting down.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: He apprehended a well-known shoplifter, and most reasonable people believe that he did the right thing.

I have to tell you that I had a meeting on October 23 with a lot of the small business community in my riding—Scadding Court—and I have to add that the small business community was palpably angered and frustrated. Giving the thief a break while charging Mr. Chen has given rise to public outrage. Common sense must prevail.

The Attorney General has the power to instruct the prosecutors to use their discretion and to drop the charges against Mr. Chen. Will you or he at least consider that?

Hon. George Smitherman: It's certainly a privilege to have a representative cross-section of small business representatives alongside Mr. Chen here in the Legislature today.

I know that—

Interjection.

Hon. George Smitherman: You're unhelpful.

I know that the honourable member who has asked the question has also, in the past, been constrained by circumstances where a matter is before the courts. I just want to tell him that I will, as he has asked, take the matter up with the Attorney General, who I'm sure will be available to have further conversation with you on this important matter that has touched many of us very, very emotionally, as we witness the hard efforts that small business people are involved in every single day, something that I had the privilege of doing in this city for 10 years.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. Minister, residents of Hamilton are hearing the media reports about delays at H1N1 clinics set up by public health units, and I know that many members of this House, like me, are hearing first-hand from our constituents who have had some difficulty accessing clinics.

Minister, I know that families are anxious about when they can take their families to get vaccinated, but they don't want to wait in lines, especially long lines, in this cold weather. There have been suggestions that the province should direct public health units to hold H1N1 clinics 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

My question to the minister: Minister, will the government be acting on the recommendation to expand H1N1 clinics, 24 hours a day, seven days a week?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: This is a very important question, and I'm sure all of my colleagues are getting the same questions in their offices.

I share the concerns that people are waiting a long time to get the vaccinations. As I said, I did speak to Dr. King last night. I talked to her about this issue. She reassured me that the rollout was proceeding as planned and that public health units were responding, in real time, to the higher-than-anticipated demand. Some are expanding their clinic hours. They're increasing the number of clinics.

I spoke to Dr. King, and I asked her to please let me know if there was anything more that needed to be done from our end to get the vaccinations out to people as quickly as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I've also been hearing from some of my constituents on Hamilton Mountain, Minister, who are complying with the instructions not to rush to the emergency room when they have flu symptoms. They're calling Telehealth, only to be put on hold for sometimes over an hour. They're calling to get information about their symptoms and what course of action they should take, but without a quick response, some are forced to go right to the hospital.

Could the minister please provide this House with information about how Telehealth is coping with the increase in calls, what the government is doing about it and if there are any other options for Ontarians looking to get medical help before taking the step of going to the emergency room?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: There has been a dramatic increase in the number of calls to Telehealth: five times more calls than we would expect at this time of year. I want to say thank you to Ontarians for using the Telehealth service. It is a good service.

I also want to reassure them that we're doing everything we can to respond as quickly as possible. We've ramped up staffing. All available resources have been put on the phones. New staff are being trained to respond.

Between October 19 and 25, 430 additional nursing hours were added to accommodate the increase in demand.

I do urge people in the province to go to the website, ontario.ca/flu, where we have put a self-assessment tool. People can go through the steps on that self-assessment tool and follow the instructions that are given to them on the website.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is also to the Minister of Health. I have been listening very carefully to the questions that have been asked of her this morning with respect to H1N1. I've also been listening to Dr. King, who does assure us that there is an ample supply of the vaccine. I'm very happy to hear that.

However, there is a problem with respect to accessibility. Many Ontario families are standing in line for hours and hours, but many others simply can't take the time off work and can't wait that long. I've also heard from doctors in my riding who have told me they haven't even been able to get their own shots because the vaccination clinics aren't open past the hours during which they're seeing their own patients, many of whom are exhibiting H1N1 symptoms.

The H1N1 virus isn't keeping 9-to-5 hours. Neither should we be. So my question again to the minister is: Will you commit to keeping the H1N1 vaccination clinics open 24 hours a day?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member opposite. To you I offer the same: If you need any briefings at all, we are more than happy to respond to that.

As I have said, I have spoken to Dr. King. She has assured me that the vaccination clinics are rolling out as planned and that they are responding in real time to the higher-than-anticipated demand. Some of that response does mean longer hours. It does mean more clinics.

Our public health units are working very, very hard to get vaccination into as many people as is possible. We do have more than enough supply for the province of Ontario.

I am asking that highest-risk groups go first and that those of us who do not fall into that high-risk group wait a little bit to get the vaccine. Let those who need it the most go first.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I understand that public health professionals are doing all that they can right now, but they simply don't have enough resources to keep up with the demand, and we need to be able to meet that demand.

Parents and families are really frustrated right now because the research is showing conflicting messages between what the Ministry of Health is saying and what the public health clinics are doing. There are different opening hours and different clinic hours and times; they're constantly changing.

Fortunately, there's a way that this can be resolved. Instead of people going to the clinics, can we not bring the clinics to them? Will the minister please commit to

opening up workplace vaccination clinics and clinics at school in order to get the people who are most at risk vaccinated as soon as possible?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Thank you to the member. I know we all have ideas about how we could do this better, but I, for one, am relying on the medical experts. We have known H1N1 was coming. We have been planning very hard for it. Those plans are being executed and the public health units are responding to increased demand.

This is not a partisan issue. This is an issue that affects all of us. The experts are doing their job. I have made the offer to Dr. King: If more needs to be done, I want her to let me know. I'm relying on her expertise and I think the rest of us should too.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Paul Miller: My question is to the Acting Premier. Yesterday in the House, the minister responsible for pensions made a perplexing statement. He said that the implementation of the Arthurs recommendation to protect monthly pension benefits up to \$2,500 would result, and I quote, in "a massive increase in what employees have to contribute in order to fund the PBGF." Will this minister stand in the House and admit that (1) employees do not pay directly into the guarantee fund—pension funds do; and (2) nowhere in the Arthurs report is it recommended that individual employees pay directly into the fund in the future? Will he stop the scare-mongering?

Hon. George Smitherman: I would say to the honourable member that I'm pretty sure that he has misinterpreted the answer.

I listened carefully to what the Minister of Finance said yesterday. I believe what he said to you was—you asked him to implement one part of a report that you liked, but he said that to move forward and implement the entire report would see the circumstances where individual employees would be expected to contribute substantially more than they have been so far; not specific to the fund that you referenced, but that many of the recommendations in Mr. Arthurs' report have broad implications. To implement the whole report, as you called for one portion of it to be implemented, would have left other things undone. I think that that may help to clarify the matter for the honourable member.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Paul Miller: The minister made another perplexing statement yesterday regarding pensions. In responding to a question as to why Ontario wasn't following Quebec's lead in helping safeguard the pensions of Nortel employees, he said, "What the government of Quebec is doing is exactly what we would do in the same circumstances ... it would not be appropriate to characterize it as doing anything different than Ontario is doing."

Will the minister admit that the Ontario government has not followed the lead of the Quebec government in offering a helping hand to Nortel employees and has

neither guaranteed the capital of Nortel employees' pensions in Ontario, nor has it agreed to hold off on a wind-up and give the assets five years to regain their value?

Hon. George Smitherman: I think what would be appropriate to acknowledge is that successive governments, over time, on the matter of the pension benefits guarantee fund, have created circumstances where it's unable, really, to fulfill its stated purpose and intent. A good bit of this responsibility, as I understand it, is to be borne by members of that member's party, who created this concept of "too big to fail."

The point of the matter is that it's a very challenging circumstance for many individuals. We know that, and accordingly, the Minister of Finance, carefully considering the recommendations of the Arthurs report, will seek to move forward in the best possible fashion, recognizing that the circumstances at hand at the moment are particularly challenging, especially for many individuals whom we all know.

TAXATION

Mr. Jeff Leal: My question today is to the Minister of Revenue and I ask it on behalf of my son, Braden, my daughter, Shanae, and all their friends who play sports in the great riding of Peterborough. In cities and towns across Ontario, hockey is a way of life, and Peterborough is no different, with strong minor hockey associations and teams like the Peterborough Petes for all kids to look up to.

Minor sports associations and families in my riding are concerned that the HST is going to place an additional and unsustainable burden on minor sports. They are concerned that these changes are going to mean less access to these sports for them. Some people are trying to claim that the HST is going to apply directly to children's recreation fees. We know that is not true, but the HST will apply to some items the minor sports associations need to provide their members. Would the minister tell us, on behalf of Braden and Shanae, if the HST means fewer kids will play minor sports in my riding and across this great province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to say to my friend, as one hockey dad to another, that what we're doing in our tax reform package is getting people back to work. The reason we do that is because the greatest indicator of whether a child can play a minor sport is whether or not their mom or dad has a job, and we have to make sure that people get back to work in this province. That's why we are doing our tax reforms.

But I would say specifically to parents that if they look at the registration for their child's minor sports today, they should see whether or not they are today paying the GST, because I can assure them that if there is no GST on the registration today there will be no HST on the registration in the future.

I would also remind, particularly our municipalities, that under the current GST rules, a municipality that provides minor sports for children who are under the age of 15 and also for people who have disabilities—that

there is today no GST, and as a result, there will be no HST, just to bring some clarity to the issue.

But the most important thing we can do is make sure that parents have a job so their children can engage in minor sports.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jeff Leal: Certainly, the opposition likes to portray the HST as having a negative effect on people when they talk about increasing hockey fees, but we need to do whatever we can to get families back to work so they can get their kids into minor sports and other activities.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Please continue.

1110

Mr. Jeff Leal: Business also says the HST is going to make Ontario more competitive and create jobs. I know our government has supporters from the business community, including the Ontario Chamber of Commerce and the Toronto-Dominion Bank.

Would the minister tell us about low-income earners faced with increased fees? Are there any benefits for them in the short term?

In summary, Minister, how will the HST help to create jobs and help low-income earners in the province of Ontario?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I would remind the member that the reason why our tax reform package has been endorsed by business and also by poverty activists is because we have struck the right balance. We are ensuring through our tax reform package that those families that have the least means will have the greatest benefit by way of our tax credit reform. It is why the federal government today provides a GST rebate of some \$140 for a child, and we'll be adding an additional \$260 per child permanently, tax-free, to the children who qualify in the province of Ontario.

As well, in the first year, a year of transition, we will be providing support to consumers, and that for those families that have a combined income of less than \$160,000, they will be receiving, by way of three cheques, some \$1,000 in the first year. That is prepaying the tax on some \$12,500 worth of purchases. We will be there for the people of Ontario and our consumers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): It is a Thursday, and perhaps there are some members who wish to get on the road a little earlier, and I can certainly arrange for that if that is what they desire. But I do want to remind the members, as I just did earlier in question period, that this is the opportunity to question the government. If you want to have a cross-debate or a discussion across the floor, and I say this to members on both sides of the House, please take it out of the chamber so that it doesn't interfere in the flow of question period, because there are many members in this chamber who do want to hear the questions and the answers.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Transportation: This relates once again to the government's apparent in-

difference to the fact that the ongoing strike at Ontario's licensing offices continues to wreak hardship on people right across this province. I want to ask the minister this: Why does he and his colleague the Minister of Labour continue to claim that they don't want to interfere in the negotiating process when now we find out that since the beginning of the strike, more than 1,000 G1 and more than 250 M1 licence applications and written tests have been administered through the Bay Street office of ServiceOntario in downtown Toronto? How can the minister justify administering tests in downtown Toronto and not make the same services available to people right across this province?

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's shameful.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Before the member for the Ottawa Valley starts giving some interjections, he should know that this is historic; this has always been the case. Remember, we're talking to individuals, good friends of mine, who were once transportation ministers: my friend the honourable Norm Sterling, in days gone by; my friend who asked the question, in days gone by. That has been the case for a long period of time. That has been grandfathered into the system since the day that my friend—

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I will offer a final warning to the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for the next 19 minutes and 53 seconds of question period.

Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: When the previous government signed the contract with Serco, it was decided at that point to retain testing services, excluding road tests, at the College Park location, originally located at Queen's Park. This location is an exception to the ministry's contract that you signed on behalf of the government of Ontario. You don't have to live in the Toronto area to visit it, but of course it is much more convenient to people there.

I appreciate the member's concern about it. I share his concern—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Frank Klees: I am aware that the United Steelworkers made an offer to the minister to extend those services throughout the province of Ontario and, in the course of the strike, make it possible for people to access those written examinations in the same way that they're available in downtown Toronto. It has also come to my attention that the minister refused to co-operate on that basis.

On behalf of people in Windsor, Sarnia, Thunder Bay, Ottawa and across Ontario who don't have access to the downtown Toronto office, I'm asking the minister: Given the fact that his negotiations are going nowhere, will he reconsider and ensure that those essential services are made available to people right across the province without discrimination?

Hon. James J. Bradley: First of all, of course, you would know, as a result of the contract signed between the previous Conservative government by my good friend Norm Sterling and circle, they're not my negotiations. I am concerned about those negotiations, I must say.

It's interesting that the member raises the issue that he does. If we were talking about bringing in replacement workers or, as people in the union would call them, strike-breakers in order to get this facility going again, there would be a huge uproar. In fact, that is really what is being suggested in this case. Remember, as you would know, because you implemented the contract he signed, that would violate the contract. There would be a huge legal suit as a result of that, because that that would violate the terms of the contract that has your fingerprints on it and Mr. Sterling's fingerprints on it.

So I'm very surprised that you, of all people, would bring—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Minister of Municipal Affairs. The city of Hamilton is reporting a projected budget shortfall of \$31.5 million, largely due to rising social services costs during these difficult economic times. Hamilton was expecting \$16.5 million from the province to help cover the costs of providing social assistance, a provincial responsibility that the McGuinty government is shirking.

When does this minister plan to announce that the Ontario government will cover the cost of social services that municipalities like Hamilton provide in good faith on the province's behalf?

Hon. Jim Watson: I had a wonderful opportunity earlier this week to be with Mayor Eisenberger and tour the beautiful city of Hamilton with my colleague from Hamilton Mountain and the Minister of Government Services. I always enjoy going to visit Hamilton to see the amount of money that has been invested in that city from the McGuinty government.

We had an opportunity to talk about the \$7.1 million for 81 rental and supportive housing units. We also talked about \$110 million since 2003 that's gone into transit to help the people of Hamilton, \$156 million in highway infrastructure and \$136 million in roads and bridges money.

This government has stood by Hamilton for the last six years. We've signed a deal with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. Next year, Hamilton will benefit as a result of uploads of ODSP and the first phase of Ontario Works.

So we're there with Hamilton. We look forward to partnering with them in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This minister knows very well the pressure on the operating budgets of every single municipality in this province, from Hamilton to Ottawa

to everywhere else. The reality is, they're picking up the costs of this government's responsibilities. It's bad enough that the McGuinty government refused Hamilton's much-needed disaster relief funding to repair massive flood damage that affected 7,000 homes. Now, with social services costs, which are on the climb during this economic tough time, again we see that the Liberals at Queen's Park are ignoring Hamiltonians.

Minister, will the McGuinty government make good on its obligation to Hamilton and commit to the \$16.5 million they need to pay for the province's programs?

Hon. Jim Watson: I don't know why the honourable member who represents Hamilton always talks down her hometown. We're proud of the fact that our members Ted McMeekin and Sophia Aggelonitis have committed funding for Mohawk College and the McMaster renovation, a great innovation for that particular community.

Let me quote the mayor in a letter to me just a little while ago: "I applaud your willingness to continue working together with our city and other municipalities, as well as your prudent decision to continue investing in our communities."

1120

As a result of the upload, which was signed a year ago this week, estimated benefits to Hamilton, when fully uploaded: 72 million new dollars for the people of Hamilton and the taxpayers of Hamilton; infrastructure stimulus funds, \$61 million; the Recreational Infrastructure Canada, Ontario program, \$3.4 million.

We've been there in the past, we'll be there in the future. We have great confidence in Hamilton—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FINANCEMENT MUNICIPAL MUNICIPAL FUNDING

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: Ma question s'adresse au ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement. Monsieur le ministre, de nombreux résidents de ma circonscription s'inquiètent de la capacité de leur municipalité de faire face à cette période économique difficile. Ils sont confrontés à des difficultés budgétaires et ils doivent faire des choix difficiles entre des programmes et des services importants sur lesquels leurs concitoyens comptent.

Il y a un an de cela, notre gouvernement a fait une annonce importante: l'achèvement de l'Examen provincial-municipal du financement et du mode de prestation des services. Ce rapport préconisait la prise en charge de plusieurs coûts de l'aide sociale, comme celui du programme Ontario au travail, de même que les prises en charge déjà annoncées du Programme de médicaments de l'Ontario et du Programme ontarien de soutien aux personnes handicapées.

Est-ce que le ministre pourrait faire une mise à jour sur la prise en charge ainsi que le premier anniversaire de l'Examen?

L'hon. Jim Watson: Je pense que c'est seulement la deuxième question en français pour moi. Merci au député de Glengarry—Prescott—Russell.

J'étais extrêmement fier en octobre dernier lorsque je me suis joint à mon collègue le ministre Dwight Duncan et aux représentants de l'AMO et de la ville d'Ottawa pour annoncer l'achèvement du rapport consensuel sur l'examen provincial-municipal.

Ce fut un moment historique pour la province de l'Ontario, et quel meilleur moyen de mettre l'accent sur le partenariat que nous sommes parvenus à rétablir avec les municipalités dans cette province? Une fois ces coûts pleinement pris en charge, les municipalités auront droit à des avantages nets par année de 1,5 \$ milliard. On célèbre le premier anniversaire de cette entente, et encore de bonnes nouvelles pour toutes les municipalités de la province et pour les contribuables.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary? The member for Ottawa—Orléans.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I know that municipal leaders and members of my community truly appreciate the work you have done on this and your advocacy for municipalities at the cabinet table. I'm proud to be part of a government that works in partnership with our municipal partners to deliver on the needs of our communities.

In our hometown of Ottawa, I hear from residents frequently asking what the province is doing to assist our community. Affordable housing and public transit are always top-of-mind concerns, and so are social assistance costs and infrastructure needs.

Minister, what do the uploads mean for Ottawa and what impact are they having today on our city?

Hon. Jim Watson: A year ago this month, we signed an historic agreement with all municipalities, including the city of Ottawa, and as a result of the uploads that the government of Ontario is going to take back from the municipal sector, the city of Ottawa will be ahead by over \$122 million. That is great news for the taxpayers and the city of Ottawa. In 2009 alone, the uploads are saving taxpayers and the municipality \$18.7 million.

We're also proud of our investments in Ottawa. Social housing dollars: \$47 million this year to provide more social housing and affordable housing for our residents. As a result of the Investing in Ontario Act, \$77 million is going into Ottawa to provide greater access for transit, to clean up the Ottawa River. It's unacceptable that raw sewage is going into the Ottawa River in the 21st century. These are just some of the examples, including over \$500 million in infrastructure projects since 2003.

We've been there for Ottawa, and we look forward to being there in the future for the city of Ottawa and the taxpayers of Ottawa.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

The town of Milton, the fastest-growing town in Canada, has been keeping up with growth, but the hospital services in Milton have not. Milton hospital was built to serve a community of about 30,000 people; today, the population exceeds 90,000 people, and by 2021, the population of Milton is expected to surpass 180,000 people. Failing to address the situation at Milton hospital puts residents' health and lives in jeopardy.

Minister, when will the people of Milton have an expanded hospital?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I thank the member for raising the question, as he did yesterday in estimates.

I do know that there is money that has been allocated, that your hospital has received for planning purposes. Many hospitals are in that position.

You do know, also, that this government has really accelerated hospital construction. There are more than 100 projects that are either under way or completed right now across this province. Part of our \$30-billion ReNew Ontario strategy included \$5 billion for hospital construction and reconstruction. That is an enormous investment, no matter how you cut it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: As I mentioned, Milton is the fastest-growing town in Canada—in fact, in North America. No town in Ontario has a more compelling case than Milton for an expanded hospital.

Minister, an expanded plan for Milton District Hospital was submitted to the ministry over a year ago, for which there were some funds put out. Still, the only answer that we've had from the Liberal government for that plan submitted a year ago is silence. The doctors and nurses of Milton hospital are doing a tremendous job, but they are forced to work against the force of inadequate infrastructure.

Minister, I've asked you before: When will the second phase of the hospital plan be implemented? We've been waiting a year already.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I do commend the member for his advocacy on the part of his community, but I would appreciate it even more if he would support the government's approach to capital expenditures across the province. It's not about one hospital; it's about our health care system.

I think it's important to acknowledge that our government has spent more on capital projects for hospitals than the previous five governments combined. We've had a lot of ground to make up for, but we are continuing our commitment to build the infrastructure that is required for excellent health care in this province.

BUS TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Transportation. Yesterday, the Manitoba government and Greyhound announced an agreement to continue bus services to rural and northern Manitoba while they work out the final details of a long-term agreement. How is it that in northwestern Ontario, rural bus service

is still scheduled to end on December 2, one month from now? How can Manitoba get an agreement and yet people in northwestern Ontario are still facing the loss of a bus service, in many cases the only transportation service they have?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I would say to the former minister, first of all, that the reason they can get it—if you're willing to shell out money and subsidize the private sector in this, I guess you can get any kind of agreement you want.

I remember your earlier statement—I wish I could find it in here; I'll paraphrase it, then—you were characterizing the company as perhaps trying to intimidate government into providing money for them, and you were saying this was a ploy of some kind. Someone will send the actual quote; I'm sure it's going to come.

I want to say to the member: We are concerned about this. We do know that there are at least two other companies who have expressed interest in providing that service in northwestern Ontario. We're encouraging them to come forward with those proposals, which I believe they are. I think it makes an awful lot of sense.

At the national meeting of transportation ministers—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: The minister talks about intimidation. No; I said from the beginning that Greyhound is in business and they're engaged in a bargaining tactic, and now, in Manitoba, the government of Manitoba and Greyhound have reached an agreement.

To say that you don't believe in subsidization—this government already provides \$35 million a year for GO buses in southern Ontario and \$25 million a year for bus and train service to Ontario Northland in northeastern Ontario. If it's good to subsidize intercity bus service in southern Ontario and it's good to subsidize it in northeastern Ontario, why don't people in northwestern Ontario count as well? Why are they facing the loss of bus service by December 2?

1130

Hon. James J. Bradley: As I indicated to the member, they aren't necessarily facing that. I know that Greyhound has said they're going to withdraw their service. There is an indication that there are two other companies, which you would be aware of—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: I'm not going to quote it. It's okay. I know it. He paraphrased it himself. To be fair to Howard, he paraphrased it himself. He said that it was a tactic, and I understand it is a tactic.

I want to say that when the transportation ministers of Canada met to discuss this matter, there was no appetite for subsidization of Greyhound in that particular case. There was a recognition, and the federal minister said he was not interested in it at all. He has characterized them as a very wealthy company that appears to be using pressure tactics at this time. But I can—

Interjection.

Hon. James J. Bradley: If you want to be critical of other services that are provided by GO, I will tell the people of those communities that you're not in favour of that, unless you can get exactly the same thing in northern Ontario. I'm sure you wouldn't want me to do that.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mrs. Liz Sandals: My question today is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. There is a growing need for improved access to services for newcomers in Guelph and Wellington. Guelph has a long history of welcoming newcomers. When I was a kid, about 40% of the population of Guelph came from Italy. But over the last decade, Guelph has welcomed approximately 7,000 newcomers. In fact, Guelph has one of the highest proportions of immigrants in Ontario. Newcomers in Guelph are in need of quality services to settle, to integrate into the community and to find a job.

Minister, what are you doing to support newcomers who choose to make Guelph their home? What assurances are you able to provide to those newcomers who intend on making Guelph their home?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member for the question. By 2016 or earlier, 100% of our net labour force growth will depend on immigration. That's why it is important that Ontario keeps its door open to newcomers, now and in the future.

That's why we invest in newcomers across Ontario, including the city of Guelph. In Guelph, we invest in settlement services, language training, bridge training and credential assessment. We strongly believe, that through these services, we are able to integrate our newcomers sooner and better.

It is true that these individuals arrive with many hopes, dreams and aspirations. It is Ontario that benefits the most when these newcomers are able to live out their hopes, dreams and aspirations here in Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: Newcomers have travelled thousands of miles to make Guelph their new home. They've travelled from India, China, the Philippines, Vietnam, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Iran and Colombia.

As I mentioned, settlement services provide a foundation for these newcomers to start their new beginning in Guelph, but there are obvious next steps that individuals need to take in order to succeed. A lack of investment in Guelph when there is a growing need could have adverse effects on the long-term viability of the city's culture and economy.

Minister, what investments are you making to ensure that our newcomers are able to integrate and to play meaningful roles in our local economy?

Hon. Michael Chan: We understand how important settlement, integration and employment are for newcomers. Our future economic prosperity depends on it. That's why investing in such programs is a priority. This is why we invest in growing communities, communities like Guelph.

We have invested more than \$330,000 in settlement services through the Guelph-Wellington settlement program since 2003. We have invested more than \$3.5 million in language training at the Upper Grand District School Board since 2003. We have invested more than \$2 million in bridge training so that individuals can get their credentials recognized and serve communities like Guelph and Wellington.

We must continue to invest in our newcomers—and we are.

NOTICE OF REASONED AMENDMENT

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 71(c), the member for Leeds–Grenville has filed notice of a reasoned amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. The bill may therefore not be called during orders of the day today.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd just ask all members to join me in welcoming the widow of a former colleague of ours, Tony Wong. We would like to welcome Ellee Wong to the Legislature today. Welcome, Ellee.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: We have some very special guests with us today to help us celebrate the 86th anniversary of the Turkish republic. In the east gallery, I'm delighted to introduce to members of this House Dr. Mehmet Bor, who is the president of the Federation of Canadian Turkish Associations; Mr. Ismail Vataner, the vice-president; Mrs. Hatice Pakdil Notidis; Mrs. Aynur Ilkay, the president of the Turkish Canadian Society; and Mr. Sükan Alkin, who is the principal of the Nil Academy. Welcome to you, and congratulations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Welcome to Queen's Park.

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'm going to have to ask the honourable member to withdraw from the chamber, please.

Mr. David Zimmer: Give him a chance in the chair.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, I'm not going to give him a chance in the chair, and if—I'll bite my tongue.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

WIND TURBINES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakubuski: I always bite my tongue too, Speaker.

Later this afternoon, my good colleague from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound is going to be tabling a resolution in this House that would essentially compel the government to issue a moratorium on any new wind projects until such time as a proper study is done, and the chief medical officer of health, the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care and the Ministry of Health Promotion would have to sign on that they're satisfied that there are no deleterious effects caused by the placement of wind turbines within the proximity of where people live.

It's about time that this government took their responsibility seriously—

Interruption.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Sorry to interrupt.

We certainly invite all of our guests and certainly welcome everyone. As much as you may wish to participate in the proceedings, we ask that you bite your tongue, maybe, sometimes and keep your hands to your side, but not participate. But we do welcome you to Queen's Park.

Mr. John Yakubuski: Thank you, Speaker. Maybe a little extra time would be in order.

Anyhow, it might be time for the government to take a serious look at this. They made all kinds of insinuated promises that they would do this during the hearings for Bill 150 and they've done nothing of the sort at this point. The opportunity will be presented to the House later today to do just that.

Such learned people as Dr. Robert McMurtry, the former dean of health sciences with the University of Western Ontario, and Carmen Krogh, a pharmacist from my riding of Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke who has done extensive research on this issue, have both asked that the government go by the precautionary principle, which is, if you don't know that there are no ill results, then let's do the study. That's all people are asking: Do the study.

Liz Witmer asked a question earlier this year on that very same subject—to do the study. They've done nothing—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

TAXATION

Mr. Paul Miller: This evening, along with NDP leader Andrea Horwath, I will be meeting with condo owners and seniors in Hamilton to discuss the impact that the HST will have on their lives.

As real understanding of the damaging impact of the new tax comes to Ontarians, they realize that the McGuinty

Liberals are prepared to sell them down the taxation river. McGuinty is prepared to make seniors and others living on fixed incomes put out more money for their basic living needs, their medical needs and their accommodations each and every day, with a faint promise of a refund when they file their tax returns a year.

The disingenuous cheerleading by the members across the floor has not fooled everyday folks, neither in my riding nor in their ridings. They know when they're being sold a line, and these smug Liberals should be very wary of the bite coming back to them in two years from now.

When the real estate market, currently the only strong sector of our economy, gets hit with the HST and begins to tumble, I'll be sure to remind the McGuinty Liberals that this is solely their responsibility and they are moving Ontario closer to the bottom.

Along with my NDP colleagues, I will continue my efforts to ensure that Ontarians fully understand the real devastation that the HST will have on every aspect of their daily lives.

I encourage constituents in every Liberal-held riding to let their MPP know that if they continue with this HST, they should enjoy their final two years on the job.

MARK DEMONTIS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: Against great odds, he did what no one has ever done before. Mark DeMontis, an outstanding 22-year-old from my riding of York South–Weston, skated from Toronto all the way to Vancouver to raise funds for blind youth in Canada who love hockey and long to play it.

Mark skated from our side of Canada to the Pacific Ocean in three months and 20 days—2,800 miles—but without central sight, because Mark DeMontis is legally blind. But Mark made up for that with the content of his character. Equipped with Rollerblades and a great team, through good weather and bad, Mark followed the shores of the lakes and rivers of Ontario, crossed the rock beds of Manitoba, the grasslands of Saskatchewan and the plains of Alberta, and passed the Rockies to reach the city of Vancouver. In Vancouver he was greeted by an enthusiastic crowd.

When I think about his journey and the cause that fired his purpose, I am truly proud for York South–Weston, for our province and for blind youth across Canada. His Quest for the West has been a real source of inspiration.

Mark DeMontis is here with us today. Mark, I hope that your future quests ride the wings of your first success.

TUITION

Mr. Jim Wilson: Next Thursday, more than 5,000 students are expected to assemble here at Queen's Park to protest the McGuinty government's post-secondary education policies. Thousands more will march through the streets of Ottawa and Sudbury to draw attention to

Ontario's new distinction as the province with the highest tuition fees in all of Canada.

In this House we hear a lot from the McGuinty government about their so-called Reaching Higher plan, a plan that proved to be nothing more than a plot to reach deeper into the pockets of Ontario students.

Keen observers know that tuition would be lower today had this government followed the Progressive Conservative plan. Even the Canadian Federation of Students recognized that: "Reaching Higher allowed tuition fees to increase higher than did the policies of the government of Premier Ernie Eves."

Students will also be here to expose the fact that unemployment in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario is at an all-time high, especially among youth. In fact, young people between the ages of 15 and 24 have been hit the hardest, losing 134,000 jobs since October 2008.

Clearly, the problem is twofold: The McGuinty government is allowing student fees to skyrocket. At the same time, the Liberals have created an economic climate where students can't even get a part-time or summer job to help pay for their share of college or university.

Increasingly, students are finishing school without much hope of a job. As one former Premier noted today when he said, "What sense would it make for students to graduate into a jobless economy?"

So I encourage all members to join with me and thousands of students next Thursday at 4 p.m. here at Queen's Park to call for changes in education policy.

SECOND BASE YOUTH SHELTER

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to speak about Second Base Youth Shelter, located in the riding of Scarborough Southwest. This shelter grew out of a 1984 youth task force initiative of Human Resources of Scarborough. At that time, some 285 Scarborough high school students were unable to access emergency shelter in their community. Second Base was incorporated as a non-profit organization in 1987. On December 8, 1993, it was officially opened. It is the only shelter of this type located between Victoria Park and the city of Oshawa.

This 24-hour, 56-bed facility for young people between the ages of 16 and 21 in need of emergency accommodation is unique in many ways.

1310

While Second Base provides food, clothing and shelter for our homeless youth, it also teaches them to be self-reliant. It promotes a sense of belonging and fosters personal growth through relationships and skills training within a community setting. These skills will ultimately empower the youth to face the challenges of the times.

Second Base can boast of many proud achievements over the years. For example, it has an alternative education program, Second Wave, which prepares the youth for their general education degree. It has a top-class catering initiative called Second Helping. With its master chef, Second Base launched its top-class catering service

for corporate and private events. Many have used these services.

In conclusion, I'd like to salute the staff, board and the youth at Second Base for their tireless commitment to making their centre a place for change and empowerment.

CASINO RAMA

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: Casino Rama is the most profitable commercial gaming casino in Canada. It is also the largest single-site employer of our First Nations brothers and sisters in Canada.

Yesterday, the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs bragged about hosting an aboriginal affairs conference in Toronto. If that is the case and he cares about the concerns of aboriginals, I would ask for immediate support from the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs with respect to the future of Casino Rama.

The operating and development agreement for Casino Rama expires in the fall of 2011. On at least two occasions at the Standing Committee on Estimates, I asked Minister Bryant and then Minister Smitherman for their support for reissuing the operating and development agreement. They both replied that negotiations were extremely positive and they supported the great work being done by the operators and staff of Casino Rama, which is situated on lands and buildings owned by the Chippewas of Rama.

The silence on the agreement is deafening, and frustration and distrust is mounting every day.

The over 3,000 employees of Casino Rama contribute to the economy of Simcoe county and Muskoka. They purchase vehicles, have mortgages and they strengthen our community.

The community is anxious to know what OLG is up to. We need to know that Casino Rama will be viable and will contribute to the economy of Ontario for many years to come. It is time for Minister Duncan and Minister Duguid to quit dithering and announce immediately that the operating and development agreement for Casino Rama will be extended. Anything less is irresponsible.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING

Mr. Monte Kwinter: I rise in the House today to remind all Ontarians of what a wonderful place the GTA is to live, work and play. In our busy lives, we rarely take the time to celebrate the diversity, culture and sense of community that the wonderful citizens create.

We on this side of the House also recognize that Toronto faces unique challenges, and we have responded with a strong financial commitment to ensure that all of our citizens can reach their full potential. These include providing \$141.5 million for the construction of 2,930 rental and supportive housing units, \$27.3 million for 1,300 housing allowance units, and \$11.2 million for 859 homeownership units; providing \$98.6 million this year and \$121.4 million next year to renovate and retrofit

existing units; and providing \$1.5 million this year alone and \$7.8 million since 2003 for Toronto rent banks, preventing 4,185 evictions and ensuring that Toronto children have the stability they need to succeed.

These investments underscore the McGuinty Liberals' commitment to municipalities around the province and to ensuring that the residents of the GTA have a roof over their heads and every opportunity to succeed.

GREEK COMMUNITY

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Ontario is home to a multitude of cultures, ethnicities and religions from around the world. This coming together has created a rich tapestry of shared experiences, a deeper understanding of each other and a greater quality of life for Ontario citizens.

The riding of St. Paul's, the GTA and ridings across the province are fortunate to have strong and vibrant Greek communities which hold the values of family, faith and inclusiveness at their core. They share and promote these values among their fellow citizens and have played a major part in the prosperity of this province.

In St. Paul's, we are fortunate to have as neighbours many members of the Greek community, including those residents of Hellenic Home for the Aged, a vital and welcoming residence for seniors. Hellenic Home will be holding their annual fundraising dinner on Saturday, November 14, at the Crystal Fountain banquet hall in Markham, and I encourage all members and their families to attend and support this important event.

Members of this House already know the vibrancy of the Greek-Canadian culture, and anyone who has experienced the wonderful food and culture on the Danforth, the devotion seen in their religious ceremonies and their dedication to family will certainly agree.

I hope that all members will join me in recognizing the Greek community, including the 100th anniversary of their establishment here in Toronto, not only during this special time but throughout the year for their contributions to the cultural richness, tolerance and prosperity we all enjoy today.

REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Eighty-six years ago, a very important event took place in the history of mankind: the establishment of a new modern state called Turkey. Since then, Turkey has tried to get closer to the west and integrate with the west on many items. It is a founding member of the United Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and a member state of the Council of Europe since 1949 and of NATO since 1952. And since 2005, Turkey is in accession negotiations with the European Union, having been an associate member since 1963.

Today, I had the great fortune to raise the Turkish flag along with many of the leadership of the Turkish

community, who are joining us today in the east gallery. While we raised the flag, we were mindful of two items. One was of course the sacrifices that had been made by Turkey in order to establish a new country. We also know that Turkish Canadians who are here today and who raised the flag with us are very important in terms of creating a new Canada, a new country, a young country. We want to thank them as well for participating in helping us in Canada to establish this country called Canada, and we want to thank them very much on the 86th anniversary of their union.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

BOTTLED WATER SPENDING ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LES DÉPENSES LIÉES À L'EAU POTABLE EN BOUTEILLE

Mr. Tabuns moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 215, An Act to prohibit the use of public funds for the purchase of bottled water / *Projet de loi 215, Loi interdisant l'utilisation de deniers publics pour acheter de l'eau potable en bouteille.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: This bill would simply take public money that is now being used to buy bottled water and instead reallocate it to provide people with municipal tap water wherever that potable water is available.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN JARDIN D'ENFANTS À TEMPS PLEIN

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I rise in the House today to highlight and celebrate Ontario's plans to give our youngest students a stronger start on their learning. As we announced earlier this week, starting in September 2010, we will be phasing in full-day learning for four- and five-year-olds.

Full-day learning is an important part of our government's plans to increase student achievement, to build a stronger workforce, to break the cycle of poverty and set more children on the road to success. Up to 35,000 kindergarten students across the province will be enrolled in full-day learning in the fall.

Notre but est que d'ici 2015-2016, tous les enfants de quatre et cinq ans puissent participer à ce nouveau programme précieux.

Giving younger students an earlier start on their learning will help improve their reading, writing and math skills, provide a smoother transition to grade 1 and help increase their success in school and beyond.

En plus d'offrir aux jeunes enfants davantage de possibilités d'apprentissage enrichi, notre programme aidera aussi leurs familles.

Parents will be able to choose to enrol their children in an extended day program before and after the regular school day portion of the program. Parents will pay a reasonable fee for the extended day option, and certainly subsidies will be available for some families based on financial need.

The extended day program will be led by early childhood educators, and teachers and early childhood educators will work together to help children learn and grow during the regular school day. These qualified professionals will complement each others' skill sets and create a learning environment able to adapt to the unique needs of each child.

1320

Ce programme sans faille facilitera l'apprentissage aux enfants, et la vie à leurs parents.

We know that we are doing this in difficult circumstances, in the midst of a tough economy and in the face of declining revenues. But we also know that we cannot afford to not do this.

I believe, as a society, we've spoken about this as a need for a very long time, and it seems there has never been exactly the right time to do it. We're on track to do this, and we're moving forward.

L'investissement dans l'éducation des jeunes enfants aura de vastes retombées.

It will give more students a stronger start in school and in life, which in turn will give our province a more skilled workforce, a stronger economy and a firmer foundation for success. By implementing the program in phases, we are being responsible in keeping it affordable while keeping our eye on the long-term goal of giving all children and families the support they need.

En 2007, notre gouvernement s'est engagé à instaurer la journée complète d'apprentissage pour les enfants de quatre et cinq ans.

Earlier this year, the Premier's adviser on early learning, Dr. Charles Pascal, presented a report that painted an ambitious vision for full-day learning in Ontario. I want to thank Dr. Pascal for all of his work.

We took some time to review these recommendations and to decide how to move forward with this program. We wanted to make sure that we got it right for our children, for families, for education staff and support workers, and for Ontario. I believe we have done that, and we're ready to start rolling this out to reach as many children as possible and to make a positive difference in their lives.

Early learning is one of the most important investments we can make as a society, and it's just one very important piece in our ongoing plans and efforts to strengthen education. We have focused on increasing student achievement and closing the achievement gap, making sure that all students are given the supports they need to reach their full potential. We've introduced a series of new programs for high school students to improve their learning experience and to help them build a promising future for themselves. Now, through full-day learning, we will be helping more children earlier, giving them the strongest possible start so they can achieve success later in school and in life.

By moving forward with full-day learning, we're giving more children in Ontario the opportunity to live up to their full potential.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I think that the announcement of this initiative in the House today is regrettable because the Premier had a big photo op on Tuesday—three days ago—regarding this initiative. Courtesy used to be extended first to members, where announcements would be made in the House and the people who had been elected by Ontarians would receive the information first. We're now getting it three days later. I think this government has forgotten who the representatives of the people are, who have been elected to represent the millions of people in the province of Ontario.

What certainly comes across in the time since this announcement has been made is that more and more people are questioning the cost of this additional program. This government announced a week ago that they have racked up the worst deficit in Ontario's history; in fact, it's \$24.7 billion. It is a massive deficit. It is unlike anything we have ever seen in this province before, and there are many people who now are questioning when and if we can ever balance our books.

This government has plunged the province now further into debt by making this announcement today. They made the announcement and they indicated that the new classes for the four- and five-year-olds would begin this fall. They said that learning would take place under the guidance of a teacher and an early childhood educator, and we would now have 26 students in the class.

What happened? For years, this government said, "We've got to have 20. We've got to have a small class size. Students can't learn in big classes"—and they have broken that promise. We are now going to see 26 students. What happened? We now know that that was simply a broken promise. It doesn't seem to matter anymore today, but I think the taxpayers are recognizing that on top of the \$24.7-billion deficit that was announced last week, which was far beyond anybody's expectations—in fact, we don't know if the final shoe has dropped yet—we now have an additional \$1.5 billion that this government is going to add to that debt and increase the deficit.

In fact, Ontario's deficit is greater than every other provincial deficit combined. This means that every household in this province is now burdened with a \$13,500

share of this government's debt, and yet the Premier is sidestepping as to how he's going to pay for this new program. He does say that there are things that will have to be cut; however, he hasn't revealed what is going to be cut.

We do know that children's aid societies in this province are running deficits. They've been mandated and given new responsibilities, but the province isn't giving them additional money. So children at risk are being put in jeopardy, on one hand, and the children's aid societies aren't going to be able to mandate the services that are required. Yet this government is going to announce a new program.

So the question that the public is certainly asking is: How do you pay? How do you pay for all these additional promises and services? We know that the Second Career program is not moving forward as promised. Certainly, the parents of these children deserve to have retraining and need to be able to get a new job.

The Premier has no plan to address his deficit. In fact, he doesn't even know how he is going to create the environment that's going to allow the private sector to create some new jobs.

We can't continue to spend public money and create new jobs without creating jobs in the private sector. It's the private sector that pays the taxes that support the public sector and support health and education funding.

Now the public is going to have to pay the harmonized sales tax as well. We're hearing about higher auto insurance rates. This Premier is leaving a debt to these young children whom he purports to serve.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to tell you right off the bat that New Democrats are supporting this initiative. Our leader is very close to this issue and stated her support a couple of days ago, when this announcement was made. We had this as our election promise in 1999, so imagine us not supporting the initiative. We support it because we believe it's good for kids.

There is always a good time and never a bad time to introduce this kind of initiative. This is preventive by way of its very nature. If we can help students in the early years and give them the skills they need to be able to go on through their early years and on to high school and do well, that's the advantage we give them. That's the benefit we give those kids and the benefit we give to our families and our economy. It's about supporting individuals and families, and it's ultimately about making our economy much more efficient.

I know it is going to be tough for some teachers and some early childhood educators to work together. Teachers are used to working alone in their classrooms, and they're going to have to learn to work with early childhood educators.

It's always a problem when you have to work with somebody else. It's a problem when you have a government and you're in opposition. There are times when you work together and there are times when you attack each

other and there are times when you sort things out. I think we're capable of that, as human beings.

I believe that early childhood educators are great at what they do and teachers are great at what they do. I believe they can work out any differences that might arise as this initiative gets unfolded.

I understand the concerns that the member from Kitchener-Waterloo raises. I disagree with her ideological inclination on this, but she does raise interesting concerns. And I have to say—because we are very critical of the government—if we managed our choices better, we'd have more money to spend on things that we agree on. You happen to believe that spending \$4.5 billion as a tax giveaway to corporations is a good thing. New Democrats believe it's fundamentally wrong to give away close to \$5 billion in that manner to corporations, many of which don't even need the money, and then we cry "poor" because we don't have any money to spend on anything, but we give it away to people who don't need it. Those are wrong choices that we make, that you make as a government. If you did not make that choice, you'd have a few more dollars.

1330

You made serious errors of judgment on many of the consultants you hired, who really don't need our support. Some of them are so happy to work for government. They make such a great living, they'll want to stay as long as they can.

We can't afford to waste money. We need it. This is the kind of initiative that is good, and if we had extra money, we should be doing this not in five years but in three, because we believe it's a good initiative.

We have concerns around some of the issues connected to this particular initiative, and that is, if you have full-day kindergarten now, do those boards get extra money to compensate, or do they count as part of the full-day learning in the early childhood education program? Do they count as part of this number, as part of the 350,000? In my view, they shouldn't. It should be additional, but if those boards are already doing it, they are taking money from some other pot. Will they be compensated by this government for doing that? This is an important question we ask, and hopefully at some point the minister will be able to answer.

The government says it's going to be done over five years. I don't know; we'll wait and see.

We're concerned that class size of 26 is an average, and that class sizes may become too large, like many of our current grades 4 to 8 classes. Many of our classes in grades 4 to 8 are incredibly large. The government is happy to say that they capped the primary grades, but they haven't done a good job of keeping the numbers low from grades 4 to 8. The numbers keep rising, and I'm hopeful this initiative is not going to add more students to that particular problem.

Mr. Pascal called for an early years division in the Ministry of Education to develop and implement a coordinated policy around—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Jim Wilson: I want to thank Cathy Scott of Wasaga Beach for sending these pages of petitions to me.

"Whereas the hard-working residents of Simcoe-Grey do not want a harmonized sales tax (HST) that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for, to name just a few, gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, house sales over \$400,000, fast food under \$4, electricity, newspapers, magazines, stamps, theatre admissions, footwear less than \$30, home renovations, gym fees, audio books for the blind, funeral services, snowplowing, air conditioning repairs, commercial property rentals, real estate commissions, dry cleaning, car washes, manicures, Energy Star appliances, veterinarian bills, bus fares, golf fees, arena ice rentals, moving vans, grass cutting, furnace repairs, domestic air travel, train fares, tobacco, bicycles and legal services; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

FIREARMS CONTROL

Mr. Mike Colle: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas there are a growing number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities;

"Whereas only police officers, military personnel and lawfully licensed persons are allowed to possess handguns;

"Whereas a growing number of illegal handguns are transported, smuggled and being found in cars driven in our communities;

"Whereas impounding cars and suspending driver's licences of persons possessing illegal guns on the spot by the police will make our communities safer;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to pass Bill 56, a bill ... entitled the Unlawful Firearms in Vehicles Act, 2008, into law so that we can reduce the number of drive-by shootings and gun crimes in our communities."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

GREEN POWER GENERATION

Mr. Murdoch: I have a petition on Bill 150. There are a lot of people from my area and all over Ontario who are here because of Bill 150 and the wind

turbines. I'd just like to introduce them all. They're all sitting up here and up there, so just wave.

My petition is to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound believe that Bill 150, Green Energy and Green Economy Act, 2009, is a new Liberal tax grab;

"Whereas a London Economics report showed that the increase in hydro bills could be at least \$1,200 per household per year plus 8% for the new HST;

"Whereas the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure has not stated where or how all these supposed new green jobs are going to be created;

"Whereas no scientific studies have been done to prove or disprove the health effects of living near wind turbines;

"Whereas the Liberals have failed to fully think out Bill 150 and how it will affect municipalities;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Liberal government should delay the implementation of Bill 150 and provide the citizens of Ontario with further research on the above-mentioned concerns."

I realize it has already passed, but maybe they could withdraw it.

TAXATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas residents in Burlington do not want the McGuinty 13% sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I agree with this petition. I will sign it and give it to page Rushabh.

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have a petition here—two different ones.

"Whereas Ontario has lost 171,000 jobs since October and over 300,000 manufacturing and resource sector jobs since 2004; and

"Whereas many families are facing the threat of layoffs or reduced hours; and

"Whereas, rather than introducing a plan to sustain jobs and put Ontario's economy back on track, Dalton McGuinty and his government chose to slap an 8% tax on everyday purchases while giving profitable corporations a \$2-billion income tax cut;

"Be it resolved that the undersigned call on the Legislature to cancel the scheduled implementation of sales tax harmonization."

I sign that petition.

SHARK FISHERY

Mr. Mike Colle: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas over 100 million sharks are being brutally killed, mutilated and butchered by the abhorrent practice of shark finning, which involves the removal of the fins of live sharks and then throwing the finless, immobile, live shark back into the ocean, where it is destined for a slow and torturous death, by either suffocation or attack by a predator;

"Whereas sharks are a vital component of the ocean's interconnected ecosystem, leading ecologists to warn that rapid decreases in shark populations will disturb the ocean's equilibrium and upset the ecosystems of the" world's oceans;

"Whereas the practice of shark finning can have disastrous effects on other fisheries, as the decrease in sharks decreases the supply of scallops, oysters and other soft-shell and hard-shell organisms;

"Whereas the United Nations General Assembly itself has noted that the decline in the shark population could have 'an impact on broader ecosystem functions';

"We, the undersigned, urge the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to support the prohibition of shark finning and to call upon the federal government to support the prohibition of this cruel act."

I support this petition. I affix my name to it.

1340

CEMETERIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, signed by a great number of my constituents in the great town of Tillsonburg.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas protecting and preserving Ontario's cemeteries is a shared responsibility and the foundation of a civilized society; and

"Whereas failure to safeguard one of our last remaining authentic cultural heritage resources, Ontario's inactive cemeteries, would be disastrous for the continuity of the historical record and our collective culture in this province;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

Thank you very much for the opportunity to present this petition.

TAXATION

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I have here yet another petition.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Be it resolved that I am opposed to Dalton McGuinty's 8% sales tax grab and call on the Parliament of Ontario to cancel its plan to introduce a harmonized sales tax on July 1, 2010."

I have a number of signatures, and I sign that petition.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: I have another petition to stop the exploitation of caregivers.

"Whereas a number of ... caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable caregivers; and

"Whereas" caregivers "are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect" caregivers "from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government deregulated and eliminated protection for" caregivers; "and

"Whereas a great number of" caregivers "perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis in their work, with limited protection" for our elderly and for our children;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the caregiver ... protection act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law."

I support this petition and affix my name to it.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mrs. Elizabeth Witmer: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save Ontario's independent school bus operators, and I have several hundred signatures.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal ... to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

"Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

"Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

"Whereas local school bus operators support ... local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

"Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

"Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association, abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities."

I'm very pleased to sign this.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Waubauskene in the township of Tay has two entrances off Highway 400, one of which is the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance has had numerous accidents, including fatalities, over the past two decades; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance is very confusing and awkward for drivers trying to make left-hand turns onto Highway 12 from either Pine Street or the Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay have expressed grave concerns over the safety at the Pine Street-Highway 400 and Highway 12 intersection; and

"Whereas there is a strong feeling in the community that traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection would save lives;

"Therefore we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay and immediately install traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection."

I'm pleased to sign that.

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition here to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I will affix my signature as I agree with the petition.

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Waubauskene in the township of Tay has two entrances off Highway 400, one of which is the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp; and

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"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance is very confusing and awkward for drivers trying to make left-hand turns onto Highway 12 from either Pine Street or the Highway 400 ramp; and

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"Whereas there is a strong feeling in the community that traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection would save lives;

"Therefore we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay and immediately install traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection."

I'm pleased to sign that.

**PRIVATE MEMBERS'
PUBLIC BUSINESS**

**RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (RENTAL
INSURANCE), 2009**

**LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA
LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION
(ASSURANCE DES LOYERS)**

Mr. Prue moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 209, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006 with respect to landlords' obligation to provide rental insurance / Projet de loi 209, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2006 sur la location à usage d'habitation à l'égard de l'obligation des locateurs de souscrire une assurance des loyers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Michael Prue: I am standing today to talk about a bill whose time I think has come. On January 11, 2008, at 1797 Danforth Avenue in the city of Toronto, an event happened that twigged my mind. This was a construction of a former bar that was being turned into a clubhouse for the Canadian navy club, and they were going to move in there. They were underpinning the floors and trying to make reparations to a relatively old building, and the entire building imploded.

You can imagine the residents who lived above it. All of the tenants of that place scrambled for their lives. They didn't know what was happening. The walls started to creak. They all got out, thank God, in time, but they didn't get out with any of their possessions; 30 people lost literally everything. They lost their televisions, their money, their clothes, their household furnishings, their dishes, their stoves, fridges—they lost everything. They lost pictures and photo albums, their family stuff. They lost everything, and none of it was retrievable.

The sad thing is, there was one woman in particular who came to us with tears in her eyes. She was a person who was on Ontario Works. Ontario Works had just approved her for starting up her own business. She was a seamstress. She had contracts from most of the local dry cleaners, and she was doing repairs, and she had bought sewing machines with the money and started her own business. She lost them too.

Not one of the 30 tenants had a penny in insurance. Not one of them had anything to fall back on. All of them went to shelters. The city of Toronto paid for it, but all of them, at the end, had to find other accommodations, and they had to start again. They had to start without a television, a bed, a couch, some dishes, food—they had nothing. They had to start all over again.

1350

The second event in my riding, which happened a little later that year, in July 2008, was at 2 Secord Avenue.

This one is very well documented; everybody knows about this. Nine hundred residents were sleeping in their beds when there was an explosion and fire caused by the transformer. They were all forced to evacuate. None of them were allowed back into their homes for days and days. In the end, all of them were out for seven weeks. They lost enormous amounts of money; they lost furnishings, they lost clothing, they lost food. In the end, when we started to recoup and try to find how we could assist them in any way, we found that almost none of the 900 people who were tenants had any insurance, and so again they had to start all over.

We decided that we had to try to do something, and I am here today to ask you to think beyond the box to try to do something to assist the millions of tenants who live in this province, almost universally none of whom have contents insurance. What I'm asking you to do, again, is think outside the box.

What we are proposing today is a very simple solution that can work, that insurance companies are in favour of and that people who are tenants—clearly most of them—will want to do. Landlords will be required to provide insurance for their tenants when there are more than five people living in a residential unit. The tenants would get insurance at basic, minimum coverage. The landlords would be entitled, under law, to recoup the cost of the insurance. It will be a minimal cost, but they will be allowed to recoup that cost through the rents. The tenants, in turn, will pay that item in their monthly rent. It is estimated, through phone calls I have made to the insurance industry, that this will cost an average of between \$8 and \$10 a month.

I do acknowledge, and will state to you flat out, that there are some tenants in Ontario who cannot afford \$8 to \$10 a month. People have asked me about those who are in rent-geared-to-income units. Yes, this may be onerous, and in some circumstances the province may have to help and assist people to have that insurance. Tenants who already have insurance—those who live at the upper end in insurable buildings will surely have insurance—will be exempt and will not be required, upon showing proof that they have insurance, to pay the additional amount.

There are a couple of examples in Ontario that have already gone down this route. The first is SoHo Insurance Inc. It may be a surprise to some—it was a surprise to me, and I have been here for some time—but SoHo Insurance provides public housing tenants with insurance already. SoHo Insurance provides to anyone who asks, through the landlord, insurance on their properties. They have two policies. The first is \$10,000 worth of contents insurance plus \$2,000 for living expenses if they are forced out, as in the case of both Danforth Avenue and 2 Secord, and \$500,000 of liability insurance. The total cost is \$13 a month. That's already in existence for people who live in public housing. They also provide a second, more generous, policy, which is \$20,000 of contents insurance, \$4,000 for living expenses if they are forced out of their home and \$1 million of liability insurance, for the magnificent sum of \$17 a month. So

we know that this can be done, and is being done, for people who live in public housing.

I was heartened, after this bill came out, that a private insurance company by the name of Sinclair-Cockburn Financial Group called me. They looked at what happened at 2 Secord Avenue. They went to the landlords and said, "How can we help the tenants of Ontario?" The landlords themselves thought that we need to help the tenants. We need to make sure that if you're forced out of your home, you have an opportunity.

I spoke to a man by the name of Eamonn Kinsella, who is the account executive. He told me that they are preparing a policy for the Greater Toronto Apartment Association, for the managers and owners to offset the losses by tenants should there be another disaster like 2 Secord Avenue. This policy that they are preparing is at the instigation of a man I would not ordinarily quote, Brad Butt, who is with the rental housing providers. He is talking about the need for landlords to be involved with their tenants to make sure that they are protected in extraordinary circumstances. The estimated cost, according to Sinclair-Cockburn, is about \$12 per month to insure the tenants, and they are going to provide for both the loss of contents and for living expenses. The policy is to be unveiled next week, and I'm sorry, I don't have any additional details.

What we are saying here is that for a very limited cost—and we believe it will be somewhere between \$8 and \$10 a month for the majority of tenants in Ontario, and the reason for that is because there are millions of tenants. If they are all insured, the insurance companies can do it at a far lower cost than either SoHo Insurance or Sinclair-Cockburn. Millions of people who do not have insurance, who face the same problems that existed when the building collapsed on Danforth Avenue or when the transmission blew out at 2 Secord Avenue, will have insurance, even if they have not gone out themselves in the past and sought out insurance, even if they were not eligible for insurance.

The province of Ontario and the city of Toronto will be respected. They will be able to stand back and say, "We have protected these people." Quite frankly, the memory of these disasters are fresh in all of our minds. The cost to the municipalities will be extremely reduced. We know what it costs the city of Toronto to house people who have been forced from their homes. In the case of 2 Secord Avenue, we know that they spent seven weeks in hotels and accommodations, seven weeks that the city of Toronto had to pick up. This could and should be covered by insurance.

We know that the costs of the lawsuits to the city of Toronto, to Ontario Hydro and to everybody else will be lessened if people have insurance and know that their chattels have been looked after and that they have somewhere decent to stay in the period until the homes can be replaced.

This will not cost taxpayers a single dime, save and except—and I'll be blunt with you—if the province determines that those in rent-geared-to-income units are

incapable of paying the amount and picks up the cost. That's the only potential cost there could conceivably be. But I leave that to the committee.

We know that Ontario homeowners have to have insurance to get a mortgage. We know that people who choose to live in condominiums have to have insurance before they are allowed to buy and to move into the condominium. It only makes sense that the millions of people who live in tenanted apartments have the same rights to low-cost insurance; to recognize that if a catastrophic event happens that is not their fault, they are covered.

I believe with all my heart that this is a good idea for tenants. I believe that tenants should be treated in the same way as homeowners and condo owners and have the right to have insurance. It makes infinite sense to insure the landlords and for the landlords to pass on those costs, rather than to have millions of people apply for policies. After all, when the insurance policy comes due and they have paid into the insurance policy, they have the same rules and responsibilities. They have to show what the loss is. They have to make the claim. They have to show what the cost of replacing the lost articles are.

The insurance companies, as I've said—there are already two of them: one who provides it, one who is about to provide it. The Ontario government just needs to mandate it for every single person. The time has come, and I ask for your support.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to stand up and comment on the bill that was introduced by the member from Beaches-East York. I listened to the member very, very carefully and listened to every word he said, and when I read the bill I didn't understand it very well, to be honest with you. I thought that there's no merit to the bill since the landlord is going to charge the tenant the cost of the insurance. But when he explained it, it made sense to me. When the massive landlords can go and buy insurance for many units, it would be cheaper than every individual buying for their unit.

1400

To my understanding, in every building that has more than five units, the landlord is already obligated to have insurance in the building. Whatever happens to the building, all the tenants would be subject to reimbursement from the insurance under the policy, which is already being applied to every building that has more than five dwellings. Sometimes it's a very complex issue because, as he mentioned, so many different tenants have different value in their apartments and their units. They maybe have some jewellery or valuable issues and then they want to go buy higher insurance. The insurance may cost more than \$10, \$15, \$20 and \$30, so I don't know how it's going to work out. I understand that not all of the tenants have the same things, same value, same appraisal. They may want to go and extend their insurance. Also, some tenants like to go and shop and buy whatever possible insurance for themselves.

In the end, it's a great suggestion, but I have great questions to the member who proposed this bill. Under the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, we put some kinds of guidelines as to how much the landlord can increase the rent. We have a fair rent increase which is about 2.1%. If the landlord added to that rent, it might exceed his allowance to increase the rent. How can we deal with this issue? It's very complex, because it's guarded by a special guideline, which is 2.1%.

I listened to the member passionately speaking about many different incidents that happened in the province. I agree with him that it's our obligation and duty to protect the vulnerable people among us because so many people cannot afford or don't have the ability to go shop for their own insurance, and I think it's our obligation as the people, as a province as a community, as a people who have more knowledge, to give them some kind of support. In the meantime, if the person also has a default in paying the landlord the insurance premium, will they be subject to eviction? So I'm not sure. This is also a question to the member who proposed this bill.

This bill, in essence, overall, is trying to create some kind of protection and protect the vulnerable people among us, but also raises so many different questions. Do we have to change the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006? Do we have to adjust it to allow the landlord to increase the rent according to the insurance that they pay? Does the landlord have a right to evict the people if they're not able to pay that insurance? All these questions have to be put in place and addressed in this bill.

As you know, according to the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, we put in place some tough regulations to create a balanced approach between the landlord and the tenants, to create a fair approach for both of them. For instance, if the landlord does not look after his or her dwelling, they have no right to increase the rent. Also, according to the rules and regulations that exist, they cannot increase the rent until they finish their maintenance and put all these good things in the apartment and make it livable for the people who live in it. So this approach is being taken by our government to address the balanced approach between the landlord and the tenants.

Every one of us in this place receives a lot of complaints from both sides: from the landlords and from the tenants. Landlords come to my office all the time complaining about their tenants not paying rent and they cannot evict them. They have to give two months' notice; they sometimes destroyed their dwelling without paying anything. At the same time, we have a lot of tenants saying to me, "That landlord is not fixing my carpet, not fixing the bathroom, not fixing this and this and this." That's what happens. We have to create a balanced approach.

In this area, the protections are very important. Hopefully we can reach some kind of agreement to address this issue very well, because it's an important issue to protect the people who have no money in case they lost their furniture or the unit burned or the unit was destroyed for some reason. I think it makes sense to reach

an agreement and see how much we can allow the landlord to charge for rent, or the landlord could absorb the insurance if the insurance was just \$5 to \$10 or \$15; I think it's not that big an expense. To my knowledge, according to many different insurance—insurance averages between \$30 and \$50 and sometimes it's \$100. It depends on what you want to add to the insurance.

I think it's a good idea; it's a good approach. Hopefully, we can fit it with our tenancy act of 2006.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to be joining the debate today. I have great respect for the member from Beaches—East York and the kind of work he has done over the years, both as a municipal representative and now in the House.

This bill, if passed, will create an obligation for landlords to obtain insurance for every residential complex containing five or more rental units, but also, it will obligate landlords to obtain and maintain insurance for their tenants for their personal property.

I don't think that this is necessarily the way to go and that it's necessary to legislate landlords to purchase insurance for their own property. Certainly, I can't agree with mandating landlords to purchase insurance for their tenants' personal property.

I'm certain that financial institutions require property owners who have a mortgage to also have insurance on that investment. It would seem evident that any prudent investor, regardless of whether they have a mortgage or not, would want to protect their investment with insurance. Business people, I think, are a lot smarter than we are. I don't think we need to legislate something that makes good business sense.

I would like to address some of the things in the bill's current form that I see as having potential to present a problem. For example, in an apartment building of multiple residential units, there are many unknown factors, thereby making it difficult for the insurer to make an accurate estimation of what needs to be covered in the building and what costs to apply to this. In light of some of these unknowns, the insurer would likely want to provide what they call blanket insurance. This would be a logical way to cover the unknown items in each tenant's individual apartment without having to itemize the precise value of their individual belongings. This bill stipulates that the cost of insurance will be added on to each tenant's rent, provided they have not opted out because of their own independently owned insurance coverage. Unfortunately for tenants, blanket insurance could result in their paying higher premium insurance rates. Adding the cost of blanket coverage could prove to be onerous to some tenants.

If we further consider this scenario and take it down the road a little bit, tenants who do opt out from the coverage their landlord provides will make that premium even higher for uninsured tenants because it would have to be pro-rated amongst a smaller number of people. We also have to take into consideration that there will be a

turnover of tenants, and all the above factors combined could make this an administrative nightmare.

It also remains a possibility that upon examination of tenants' credit ratings—credit scores, as they're called—a practice which is currently allowed, the insurer could either decline coverage because it deems the client too much of a high risk, or could charge an exceedingly high premium.

Leaving individual tenants to purchase their own content insurance makes more sense. It will allow the insured to be charged an appropriate rate for the actual content and personal belongings of the apartment, and prevent them from being overcharged with blanket insurance.

Also, the bill presently remains silent on what would happen should an insurer choose not to provide coverage for the landlord.

1410

As I said at the beginning, we should not be legislating good business sense. Although I can appreciate where the member from Beaches–East York is going with this bill, I think that the best option is for individuals to accept the personal responsibility and thereby have the choice of their own insurance coverage. The same applies to the property owner of a complex.

While I understand the devastation of losing everything in a fire, I believe that awareness regarding the prudence of having insurance or including the cost in the calculation, in the case of social insurance recipients, is a more realistic approach.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate.

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ça me fait extrêmement plaisir de parler en faveur du projet de loi 209, le projet de loi sur l'assurance pour les locataires. Le projet de loi est simple : les locataires devront avoir une assurance pour leur propriété personnelle, ce qu'on appelle souvent entre nous « le contenu ».

Le projet de loi rend l'assurance obligatoire pour tous les locataires, mais il fait ça d'une façon pratique et économique. Dans un premier temps, pour ceux qui sont locataires et qui ont déjà de l'assurance, il n'y a pas de problème. Ce projet de loi ne s'adresse pas à vous. Pour les millions d'Ontariens qui sont locataires et qui n'ont pas d'assurance, ce projet de loi vous offre une protection—pas une immense protection, mais une petite protection—pour vous assurer que vous pouvez retomber sur vos pieds si, par malheur, vous avez à vivre une tragédie.

Donc, si vous demeurez dans un appartement qui a plus de cinq unités, vous serez automatiquement couvert pour une prime qui peut aller jusqu'à 5 000 \$ et couvrir entre deux et quatre semaines de loyer ailleurs si votre foyer a été tellement détruit par les flammes, l'eau ou quoi que ce soit que vous n'êtes pas capable d'y retourner dans un délai raisonnable. Donc, au moins, vous aurez un peu d'argent pour vous payer un autre loyer et pour acheter les nécessités de la vie. Un manteau d'hiver, des bottes en hiver, ce sont des nécessités; un lit, une table, quelques ustensiles de cuisine, ce sont des

nécessités, et ça ne prend pas de temps que les 5 000 \$ passent, mais, au moins, vous aurez les nécessités pour retomber sur vos pieds.

On parle en ce moment du fait que 70 % des locataires en Ontario n'ont pas d'assurance. Je peux vous donner des exemples. Comme j'ai déjà dit en Chambre, mon mari est pompier. Je me souviens d'un feu dans une région de Sudbury qu'on appelle le Moulin-à-fleur où près d'une douzaine de familles se sont retrouvées, en plein milieu de l'hiver, avec l'appartement complètement détruit par les flammes. Il y a également eu une personne qui est morte dans cette incendie-là.

Aucune des familles qui demeuraient dans ce bloc appartements n'avait d'assurance. Je me souviens que les pompiers se sont collectés entre eux pour être capables d'aider ces familles-là. Si on avait eu une assurance comme ça, cela aurait rendu la vie beaucoup plus facile pour tout le monde. Il n'y a personne qui aime voir les gens dans le besoin. Pourquoi n'est-on pas proactif pour mettre en place des projets de loi qui aident les gens avant qu'ils aient à vivre des traumatismes dont ils vont se souvenir toute leur vie?

Ces gens-là vont se souvenir de l'incendie comme la pire journée de leur vie. Puis qu'est-ce que le gouvernement avait fait proactivement pour les protéger? Absolument rien. On a dit que les « business » vont s'occuper de ça et qu'on ne devrait pas dire aux propriétaires comment gérer leurs affaires, mais pour moi, c'est de la foutaise. Les gouvernements, on est là pour aider les gens. On a la possibilité en ce moment d'aider un paquet de gens qui vont vivre des traumatismes et des tragédies. C'est sûr qu'on ne souhaite ça à personne, mais on sait que ça va arriver.

C'est un projet de loi qui est bien pensé, qui va offrir une petite couverture et qui, en fin de compte, ne coûtera pas grande chose, et, en plus, ne coûtera à peu près rien au gouvernement. Donc, c'est sûr que je suis en appui du projet de loi. Si on peut aider quelques victimes de tragédie à passer à travers de ça d'une façon une petite plus humaine, je trouve qu'on a une obligation comme députés d'aider ces gens-là.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Merci. Further debate?

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: I'm glad to have the opportunity to speak about this particular bill from the member from Beaches–East York. I must say that I think the member certainly has good intent for what the bill is going to accomplish, but to a certain extent, the broadness of the bill, although it is a very simple bill, leaves a lot to be desired.

Some of the things we've already heard previously from some of the members who talked about this bill. Although I said a few minutes ago that I think the intent is commendable—when we try to help those folks who are sometimes less fortunate, for whatever reason—I guess one of the things we say is, here's another piece of legislation where governments of all stripes get strongly criticized for meddling in private business, things we

shouldn't be a part of. So this could certainly be looked into.

Here we are legislating something where the private sector and the tenants are doing a decent job managing their affairs. With the last revision to the Residential Tenancies Act, I think we've built up a good relationship between tenants and landlords, and we've put on those things in between to resolve some of these issues.

I was delighted to hear—and I'll be honest with you. I wasn't aware that there were companies that offer those kinds of policies.

Interjection: That's interesting.

Mr. Michael Prue: About to.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: About to, and that's really interesting. I think it's great. This is a great opportunity for tenants and landlords to get together and make those choices together. When I say "together," here's a proponent with a product for that market where both could have a say, and it could happen if the willingness was there.

The other challenge I find is—I think we've all experienced in this House; I know I have—whenever you go and get a new quote, whether it be for car insurance or home insurance, depending on your past record, a number of circumstances that I would never dream of until they come back with a quote make a huge difference on premiums.

Once again, if this was a general blanket coverage, I think you'd find some folks with a really good record paying for somebody else's poor record. As I hear from one of the speakers that these things could be individualized, this would be a real nightmare to manage from a landlord's perspective. So the administration piece is something that creates somewhat of a burden.

I'm just going to reflect again—and I can't reflect it enough—the piece about having government interfere when things have been working fairly well. In many cases, when a tenant goes in and signs a lease—I know that the lease I signed, as I do have an apartment just up the road, like some of the other out-of-town members—there are some conditions attached that we all have to meet, and I think that's spelled out fairly clearly.

Once again, I'm not sure how many wealthy tenants are out there who buy properties. Maybe there are, but I couldn't. But, as they mortgage their properties, like we do with our own homes or cars—we have to have insurance if we finance it—they have to make sure they have adequate coverage for those things.

So those are a number of questions, but for me, the fundamental one is government interfering with something that's already out there that we should not interfere in. But I am delighted to hear that there are potential companies out there that will have such a product available, and I think we should let the market, along with the tenants, negotiate those potential policies.

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Personally, I think that if there is a product—there will be a good product out there—I'm sure other companies will jump on board and be able to either match or better

what that product is. I'm going to have a hard time supporting Bill 209. I commend the member once again for his efforts; I think his heart is in the right place. The intent is there, but I'm not so sure it's necessary, once again because of the cumbersomeness it creates, and I think tenants will be able to determine what they can afford and what their right coverage should be, and let that play itself out.

I have a lot of respect for the member, but unfortunately I will not be able to support this piece of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, the wolves are going to turn on me. I can feel it coming. First of all, I want to say that I will speak in support of my good friend's bill, and I'll tell you why.

I've listened to the arguments put forward: Let the private sector figure this out because, after all, only business knows how to do these things and only they can do it well. They're doing it so well that they're at the trough in North America and Europe to the trillions of dollars for us to pay for the mistakes they've made when it comes to business decisions. When I hear Liberals or Tories say—and there's not very much difference between the Liberals and Tories when you listen to this kind of debate—that business knows how to do it best, I just want to remind them that, yes, I believe the private sector has a key role to play in the development of our economy—I'm not a big interventionist in my own right—but I also understand there is a role for government. If we were to take the position in Canada that business should not get in the way of people by legislating things and doing things, there wouldn't be much civil society left in this country.

These same arguments were made back in the 1950s and 1960s as we brought medicare into Canada. People argued, "You can't let government get in the way of business because, after all, only doctors know how to run the health care system, and if you allow government to get involved, it will be a terrible, awful thing." God, you can't get a Conservative to speak against medicare in Canada now, because even they have to admit that the government has a role to play. So I don't buy this argument that we don't do this because business knows how to do it better and we have to allow business to do it.

Here's the issue: There are literally tens of thousands of people who have apartments and are not insured. Why is that? A lot of tenants don't even know they're not insured. How many people have gone into a rental agreement in a large apartment building or a not-for-profit housing complex who automatically think they themselves are insured? I've had them come to my office, and I'm sure you've had them come to your office. They've been involved in a fire. I remember in a particular one there was some water damage in a subdivision, and they came and said, "I'm living in a not-for-profit housing complex. I would have thought, if there was a sewer backup, that there would be some kind of insurance on the part of the housing complex to pay for the damages to

the goods I had inside my basement.” There wasn’t. So the tenant was out, in that particular case, because he was not aware that there was no insurance on the contents he had in his apartment building.

What we’re trying to do here—or, I should say, what Mr. Prue is trying to do—is set up a system by which a landlord has to make sure the units with five people or more that he is renting are insured to a fairly small minimum when it comes to contents. It’s not a large minimum; you’re talking 10,000 bucks max. So you’re not talking about a lot of money here.

What’s the point? It’s no different than what we do when it comes to health coverage. We ensure, by way of our taxes in this country, that every citizen of Canada and every citizen of this province is insured when it comes to health care. We do that how? We do it through the collecting of taxes. If you’re making \$1 billion a year and a bonus working in some company somewhere or you’re working at \$10 an hour or you’re unemployed or on a pension, you are automatically insured. If something happens to you, your family doesn’t have to go bankrupt in order for you to be provided with much-needed health services.

What do we do with vehicles? We understand that if we left it to the private sector, there would be a whole bunch of people driving on our highways with cars that would be uninsured. We decided in this country years ago, and each province has followed suit, that we make it mandatory that you have auto insurance to plate a car and put it on the highway. Why do we do that? Because we understand that if we leave it to the individual, people will say, “Hmm. Pay \$900 for insurance or \$900 on a holiday in Cuba this winter?” Right? A person is going to say, “Cuba looks awful good from where I stand.” So people would not insure their cars if you didn’t have mandatory auto insurance. We don’t have public auto insurance, which is a whole other debate—one of the things that I think we should have done in government, but that’s for another debate.

But my point is, we understand the concept when it comes to automobiles, because we say that if we were to make it so that it was strictly a voluntary system and we waited on the good graces of people who sell cars—the dealers—or the people who finance cars—the banks, the finance companies or GMAC, whoever it might be—there would still be many cars that would be uninsured on the highways in Ontario. We have it by law in Ontario that every automobile that is to be plated must be insured to a particular minimum. We do that not only for the protection of the individual, but also for the protection of everybody else who’s driving on our highways. This concept, what Mr. Prue is asking for, is not something that is very different than what we’ve already done in a whole bunch of other areas.

I make the following proposal. I’ve heard some legitimate arguments about the level of insurance. There have been some technical arguments made about, “The bill should do this, that or the other thing.” Allow it to pass at second reading. Let it go to committee and let the com-

mittee deal with the issues of how we should deal with some of the technical issues that were raised by some of the other members. At least allow the bill to get to committee, and then let’s hear from landlords and tenants, let’s hear from insurance companies and others who know something about this—to come before our committee at some point and say, “We’re in favour”; “We’re opposed.” “Here are the reasons why we’re in favour”; “These are the reasons we’re opposed.” Then people can amend the bill to their liking, and if they don’t like the final product, then vote against it or vote for it at third reading. It’s a simple thing.

Let’s not let our political ideology get caught up—and I say this to my Liberal and Conservative friends: Don’t allow your ideology to get in the way of a good idea, because if we would’ve allowed right-wing ideology in Canada to get in the way of a good idea, there are many things that we take for granted today that we would have never had, such as making sure that we have universal health care, such as making sure that we have an equal chance for every kid to go through a system of public education. We do many things in this country as a result of understanding that we do things together, and by standing together and doing those things in a collectivity, we are much better off as a society in the longer run.

His proposal is not a radical one. It strictly says that a landlord will make sure that when he or she purchases insurance on their building, if it’s five units or more, he or she will have content insurance for the tenants when they come in. The cost of that wouldn’t be that high because it is a better buy because you’re buying—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was going to get to that point, But the point is, it’s a better buy because it’s not every individual going. To the argument that the right-wingers have put up in this debate that, “Oh, you can get a better deal if you go out and do it yourself”—give me a break. We all know that if you can put a large number of customers together, be it, in this case, apartments, and say, “I want to buy insurance for 50 apartments versus one,” you’re going to get a much better price per unit if you’re buying for 50 versus one. It’s a cheaper way of doing it and, in the end, the cost is not a cost that is incurred by the landlord; it’s passed back on to the tenant.

But it gets back to the point: I also have a responsibility as a tenant, and we need some mechanism to make sure that at least I have some minimal protection, if I was a tenant, to be able to do it. It’s a concept that’s done in condo buildings; it’s a concept that’s done by every financier of a mortgage in the province of Ontario, in the country of Canada. We ensure that there is going to be insurance. Why? Because it is the right thing to do, and I ask the people to support this bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Prue, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Michael Prue: I thank the members from London–Fanshawe, Burlington, Nickel Belt, Northumberland–Quinte West and Timmins–James Bay for their contribution to the debate.

The member from London–Fanshawe raised some questions. Just to explain to him: There will be an exemption for every single person who can show proof of insurance; they won't have to pay the additional fee. The pass-through is already allowed under the laws of Ontario, that you can pass through hydro and every other extraordinary cost, if they go up, and this would be one of those pass-throughs that are allowed, that of insurance.

Tenants will be allowed to and will be encouraged to get more insurance than what this bill provides for. This is for minimal insurance. I have not set the rates because I believe that needs to be done in committee, but we are looking in the \$5,000 to \$10,000 range, so that if you were flooded out, if you have a fire, if the transformer blows, if some extraordinary damage happens to your unit, you will have the wherewithal to get a television, a bed, a couch, some sheets and blankets and some food and a refrigerator to start over again. This is not extraordinary insurance. It's not intended to cover jewellery and extraordinary things. You have to show receipts of what was lost in order to get the new stuff back.

1430

For the member from Burlington: Landlords already pay insurance. We are merely suggesting that they pay an additional amount of insurance that they are entitled to recoup, and tenants, again, will have to produce documentation.

The member from Nickel Belt said that her husband was a firefighter and provided anecdotal evidence of how firefighters and communities have to band together to pay when people have nothing left. This is what we're hoping the insurance will cover.

The member from Northumberland–Quinte West said that this is a private business. We are asking that it be public business, because we as taxpayers are involved. We pay when people have nowhere to go. This is not intended to be individualized but is intended to be for everybody; hence what the bill proposes.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For the members in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on this ballot item in about 100 minutes.

CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AUX CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES

Mr. McNeely moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change / Projet de loi 208, Loi visant à augmenter la sensibilisation aux changements climatiques.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I'm pleased to have this opportunity to speak in the Legislature, but also to the students who would be watching this debate today. I met with about 100 students and teachers last Friday and I told them about this, and I hope to have the opportunity—in any case, I'll be sending them out a copy of the proceedings today.

This private member's bill, if passed, would name April 21, the day before Earth Day, Climate Change Awareness Day. It would also require the Minister of the Environment to produce a report card on certain indicators of climate change, which would be delivered to students in grades 5 to 12 in schools throughout our province. I'll speak about this report card shortly. I advanced a similar bill in my third year in the Legislature, in 2006, but it did not get to third reading and therefore did not become law.

Many of you watching and here today may consider this bill to be trivial, of no consequence; a waste of time. However, the scientific community agrees that climate change is the most pressing, serious challenge that humanity currently faces. The term refers to the changes in weather patterns and global temperatures—and here we're referring strictly to the human causes of climate change. As we all know, this type of climate change is caused by increased concentration of greenhouse gases in our atmosphere, which trap heat. Deforestation also contributes to the problem, as the lungs of our planet become less capable of absorbing carbon dioxide.

We note that the Earth has undergone climate change naturally over the last several million years, but the changes that we have seen in the past few decades cannot be attributed to our planet's natural cycle. In fact, without human interference, scientists tell us that the planet should actually be cooling, but the exact opposite has happened. Over the last 100 years that we have been burning fossil fuels, the Earth's average temperature has risen by 0.74 degrees Celsius. Although this may not sound like much, consider this: With a two-degree rise, most of the world's coral reefs will be lost, large portions of the ocean will become dead zones, mountain glaciers will largely vanish and many other ecosystems will be at risk. It brings the risk of reaching a tipping point, where the Greenland and western Antarctic ice shelves could melt, leading to catastrophic rises in sea levels. Only a one-metre rise could leave 500 million people homeless, forced to evacuate low-lying areas. For all of these reasons, it is crucial for the sake of humanity's future that we build awareness of this problem. That is why I have introduced Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change.

As mentioned, in addition to naming April 21 as Climate Change Awareness Day, the bill asks the Minister of the Environment to produce a report card containing indicators of climate change. It also asks the Minister of Education to provide all Ontario students in

grade 5 to grade 12 with that report card. I hope that students watching like the idea of governments measuring their performance rather than the government measuring yours.

The first thing that the report would indicate is the amount of greenhouse gases being produced globally, by Canada and by Ontario in both the last year and back to 1990. This will give readers an opportunity to see whether we as a province, or Canada as a country, or the planet, are making progress in reversing global warming.

Second, it will report on the amount of carbon dioxide already in our atmosphere, giving the most recent estimates and annual figures back to 1990.

Third, the report will rank the 10 highest-polluting countries on a per capita basis, allowing us to see who the biggest culprits are and see how Canada ranks—and we rank very high in the most-polluting people on the face of the planet. We're up there with the US and Australia as the worst.

The fourth indicator that would be reported—and it's reported every year; we see newspaper articles of it; it's done with existing information—is the least sea ice that occurs each summer. There have been indications that the sea ice in the Arctic would be disappearing in 40 or 50 years. Now we find that the Arctic ice cap is sort of a canary in the coal mine and a very visible representation of how the pace of climate change is affecting our climate.

Fifth and sixth are lists of any new species added to Ontario and Canada's list of species at risk.

Polar bear populations in Ontario are the seventh indicator of climate change, as their northern habitats are suffering from the effects of global warming. Many of the polar bear populations are decreasing and many are stable, but at least we would see what is happening to the polar bears in Ontario.

Finally, the bill would allow the Minister of the Environment to track any other indicators that he or she feels relevant, and maybe that list could be established by the students throughout Ontario. That could be one of the projects, because climate change, global warming and sustainability are part of the curriculum now and could be included in a little bit more detail. I know that there are probably hundreds of students with good ideas out there about what we should be measuring. I want to hear those ideas.

Although all of this information exists elsewhere, collecting it in one place, in one report, will allow the public and the students to get an overall picture of the health of our global environment, and it would let individuals see how their elected representatives are performing on this issue. I think this is very important.

Why is climate change relevant to young people? Well, if you have followed the news lately, you would have read about a British research team that recently spent 73 days measuring the Arctic ice. That research confirmed what we've been hearing: Because of rising temperatures, by the summer of 2030, the Arctic Ocean will be ice-free in the summertime.

By 2030, you students in our high schools and elementary schools today will be getting married, starting a family or buying a house. On average, you would be 35 years old, in the prime of your life, and wonderful things will be happening. But ships will travel across the North Pole—saving shipping costs, I suppose. Oil companies will be mining the sea bottom and, no doubt, pumping more fossil fuels and producing more CO₂. But because the Arctic ice has melted, the blue ocean would not reflect the sun's rays, and global warming will accelerate. The under-ice ocean of today would change rapidly and many ocean species would be under stress. The permafrost would be melting, and this would further release greenhouse gases. We would have set in motion irreversible changes that would put our entire planet as we know it in danger, and young people have the most at stake. This is why, out of all groups, this bill seeks to inform you.

Some governments and some people are taking action. Ontario has committed to reducing its greenhouse gas production below the Kyoto 1990 levels: 6% below in 2014, 15% below by 2020 and 80% below by 2050. We are closing the province's biggest polluter, coal-fired power generation, by 2014, reducing Ontario's carbon dioxide production by 30 million tonnes annually. We have successfully increased our renewable energy generation by orders of magnitude. Two weeks ago, I was in Arnprior, just west of Ottawa, where we were opening the largest solar project in the province. We are aggressively encouraging water power and water conservation. We are also proposing a new law that would establish a cap-and-trade system in Ontario, giving companies an incentive to reduce the pollution they produce. This will mean that we no longer look at carbon dioxide as a no-cost waste that we can dump in our atmosphere.

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Most Ontarians are willing to do their share; however, our federal partners need to do more as we approach the December meetings in Copenhagen. Canada signed the Kyoto Protocol, but the Harper government, as the government before it, has done nothing significant yet. In 2002, Mr. Harper said, "We will oppose ratification of the Kyoto accord and its targets. We will work with the provinces and others to discourage implementation of those targets. And we will rescind the targets when we have the opportunity to do so." So it's no surprise that Canada's greenhouse gases, through the lack of government action since the treaty was signed, have increased 26% since 1990. This, as some might think, is an action of environmental terrorists, because we know what's going to happen—and we're a rich country; we should lead—and we know that Canadians are not environmental terrorists. We are 33.8% above our Kyoto commitments, according to Environment Canada.

Several groups, including a group made up of the Toronto-Dominion Bank, the Pembina Institute, the Suzuki organization and an economic guru who probably does the best economic analysis of anyone in Canada, brought out a study yesterday—and studies have all

concluded that there is no evidence that the Harper plan will come anywhere close to achieving Kyoto targets.

This past September, the chair of the UN's Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change said, "In the last couple of years, I'm afraid, Canada has not been seen as sitting at the table. I think Canada should be doing much more."

We are one of the world's worst polluters per capita, and instead of leading, we are hindering progress on global greenhouse gas reductions. Politicians and adults are not doing enough, so students—tomorrow's leaders—must lead now. Tomorrow may be too late.

That is why I'm encouraging students in my area to get involved in this issue. For the third year in a row, I've launched a climate change challenge in my riding. This is a friendly competition between students and schools in Ottawa-Orléans to build awareness of climate change. In 2007, I asked students to produce posters in a contest; in 2008, videos; and this is the one we're trying this year.

I need your help in getting the bill passed. I need groups in each school who are concerned with climate change to sign petitions to mobilize support and to come to Queen's Park to help me get this passed. If the adults cannot get it done, then it is time our youth take action to protect their future.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to address this proposal.

Here we are again, debating the finer points of yet another day, another designation. In this session alone we've debated Peace Officers Memorial Day, Tom Longboat Day, Congenital Heart Disease Awareness Day, Greenbelt Day, National Students Against Impaired and Distracted Driving Day, Stop Human Trafficking Day, St. John Ambulance Day, and on and on—many, many days. To what extent we lose some of the impact, and to what extent previous designated days lose some of their importance by going down this route—although we all recognize that any attempts to raise not only awareness but to try to dig out just where governments are coming from with respect to policy, whether it's the McGuinty government or the Harper government or the governments of China or India or Russia, is very important. April 21, I think, will be designated as the day. That's already taken, as I recall, by Earth Day; it's either the 21st or the 20th. The proponent's heart may be in the right place, but quite frankly I'm not sure that designating yet another day and ponying up the money through our boards of education to distribute an additional report card to students—I'm just not sure of the kind of impact.

It is important. I used to teach environmental science, and climate change—the greenhouse effect—was part of my curriculum. That was 1969, and here I am. I find that we are continuing to discuss this, with little evidence of direct action, and there are reasons for that.

The member for Ottawa-Orléans mentioned the TD-funded report that came out yesterday, for example—it is

in today's Globe and Mail. Again, there are reasons, and one is cost. I've got the article here. The cost to meet Mr. Harper's targets would be \$8 billion. I don't know whether people in Canada, especially in western Canada, are willing to go along with that.

Further to the Globe and Mail, I might refer the member to the May 15, 1953, edition of the Globe and Mail. I have a copy of this; I don't throw anything out.

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: That was a good year for people to be born.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Back then there were about two billion of us in the world, and, in keeping with the member for Ottawa-Orléans, human activity is part of the problem. There are now—what?—6.8 billion of us, just in the lifetime of many of us here, the baby boom crowd. That's a very serious problem; more serious, in my view, than global warming.

The 1953 headline in the Globe and Mail: "Carbon Dioxide in Air Making World Warmer." We've known about this since 1953. I don't know whether the Ontario Legislature was debating this in 1953. I don't know whether the government of the day was doing anything about it. So whether it is 1953 or 1969 or 2009, I'm concerned that the debate will continue without any glimmer of a practical, doable, politically acceptable policy in this province, and I recognize that this is not so much a provincial issue and not so much a national issue. This is a global issue.

The report that was referred to by the member opposite goes on to say that either through direct taxation—the Dion approach—or by capping emissions and forcing companies to buy allowances, which essentially comes up with the same result, the federal government would receive approximately \$46 billion or more in revenue, which it would then redistribute through spending and personal tax cuts.

This government also has cap-and-trade legislation. I do hope that members present sit in on the general government hearings next week—that would be Monday afternoon and Wednesday afternoon—when we're discussing cap and trade.

Whether it's cap and trade or a carbon tax, it's essentially the same end result: It would be a green shift, and many people are aware that if this were to occur over the ensuing years, they're going to have to hang on to their wallets. A redistribution of wealth, as we read in the Globe and Mail today, not only within Canada but, with the purchase of credits overseas, the spectre—many people are concerned about this, as it is a method of redistributing wealth from the west, if you will, to the developing world, to countries like China and India. That's why it is so important at the national level. I don't know whether the Premier is communicating with China and Russia and Brazil and India, some of the very large emitters, on this. I know we're talking to Utah and we're talking to Nevada; I'm not sure how significant the carbon dioxide emissions are in those jurisdictions.

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I am with the minister, or—not a minister; who knows, in the future?—the member opposite with respect to the preamble to the legislation where a government member actually mentions the elephant in the room with respect to environmental sustainability and the kinds of numbers that I just mentioned, with respect to the impact of ongoing increases in population, not only those born in 1953, but the incredible population growth that we've seen since 1953, essentially since the Second World War. I'll quote the member opposite.

"The world's population in 1950 was 2.5 billion, in 2007 it was 6.7 billion and by 2050 it will increase another 2.5 billion. Additionally, in the next few decades, it is expected that, as a result of ongoing economic development in the less developed world, 2.5 billion people will join us at our level of consumption"—again, here in the West, in my words—"of the world's resources. This will greatly increase greenhouse gas production by humans."

I do know that the government bill itself, if you read that legislation, makes reference to human activity and its contribution to carbon dioxide and the problems that will go with that. So it brings up this inconvenient truth, which is the fact that there are too many of us in this world and this planet is suffering as a result.

Further to that article in the *Globe and Mail*, they have an editorial referring to that Pembina Institute and the David Suzuki Foundation study that came out yesterday. Their analysis, as they indicate: "It is the wrong approach; its all-out attack on the oil and gas sector is politically and economically unacceptable, and would euthanize a vital Canadian industry." So that's the *Toronto Globe and Mail*.

They go on to say, "The industry would be devastated, and so too would Alberta's economy (and, to a lesser extent, Saskatchewan's)." And they indicate again, "This is unacceptable."

They make mention of the concept of purchasing emission credits, and again, they indicate there has been little political ground laid for this transfer of wealth from Canada to poorer countries. I would suggest that anyone who is interested take a look at that report and a great deal of reporting on that as well in today's *Globe and Mail*.

Just going back to the point that we do agree on with respect to the spectre of continued population growth: One example would be Ethiopia. Gwynne Dyer did an analysis of the great hunger in Ethiopia; it was the mid-1980s, a million people died in Ethiopia, so that's 25 years ago. Subsequent to that, expertise came in as far as farm practices, the use of fertilizer, and within a number of years, Ethiopia became self-sufficient in food; this was by the late 1990s.

However, guess what happened in the last 25 years in Ethiopia? The population doubled. It went from 40 million to 80 million. That part of the world, as we know, is in trouble again. I'm just talking about one country, and perhaps this is the future for many other countries in

the world. Ethiopia's population will double again to 160 million people in just 32 years. Uganda: There's a country that's about the size of Oregon as far as geographic area. When they gained independence in 1960, they had five million people; now it's 32 million people. The current growth rate will have 130 million people, again, by the year 2050. That's actually more than—no, that's close to the population of Ethiopia.

It's unfair what happens within the world. I don't think there's enough aid to continue to support this kind of population growth, and when you see this population growth in other countries like China and India, which are rapidly industrializing—I've lost count of the number of coal plants that are being built in India and China, projected in the United States. But much of this problem relates to human activity and human numbers.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today to Mr. McNeely's bill. I have to say, first of all, that I have a lot of respect for the member. He has spoken consistently in the House for action on climate change. He makes a reasoned argument. He does not come at this in any sort of opportunistic way, and I have to say, when he sets up a scientific case, he sets it out, in many ways, as I would.

Frankly, if we were in a position where I could amend his bill to add further refinements, that in and of itself might be useful. I personally would put in such a bill a requirement that the government report precisely on what it's done—what investments have been made and what investments have not been made in the past year—to actually move things forward.

That being said, even though I will vote for this bill and I have told my caucus's critic that we should vote for this bill, increasingly I don't believe that our problem is a lack of awareness. I think people are aware. I think people have seen the nature shows on television and they've seen the news reports. Frankly, a year and a half ago or two years ago, before the financial crisis broke with full force on the world stage, one was regularly seeing reports on the news, short documentaries about the impact of climate change. I would say that the population, on the whole, is aware of the problem. Maybe not in every detail and maybe not every particular item, but they know that there is a world-scale problem out there, one that will affect themselves and affect their children and one that has to be addressed. I don't believe that the problem is a lack of awareness; I think our problem is a lack of action.

I will speak a bit to my history with this issue, but I have to say that we can't take on this problem unless we understand the kind of problem that we have. It is not simply a biological problem or a physical problem; it is not an intellectual issue; it is not a question of passing one good law or another, because laws, in fact, simply reflect relationships of power within a society. It's the larger questions that have to be addressed.

As the member before me indicated, there are substantial issues on the table that have to do with industry. There are trillions of dollars at issue. There is the future of the oil and gas industry on the one hand and the future of our society on the other, and I have to say, having dealt with these sorts of battles in the past, that we are facing a knock-down, drag-out battle with the oil and gas sector and with the coal community, all of whom are interested in protecting their interests. Frankly, although I won't say this is true of all of the people in the oil, gas and coal communities—certainly with leading sectors of it, those who are politically powerful and politically active—there is no question that they are energetically defending their interests; that they have financed work to slow down and stop action on climate change; that they have done their best to confuse the issue, confuse the public. If we don't understand that reality, then all the legislation that we put forward in terms of awareness will be of no consequence.

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The Globe and Mail today reported on the study done by the Suzuki Foundation and the Pembina Institute, financed by the Toronto-Dominion Bank. It was quite an interesting editorial because they understood that what was at stake was a dramatic reduction in the amount of oil and gas to be produced. You can't reduce greenhouse gas emissions without reducing the production of oil and gas. They were not interested in that. They said the cost was too high.

I have to say that we here in Ontario are paying the other side of that cost. When a line of tornados goes through Vaughan and people have their houses ripped apart, that is part of the cost. When you have unprecedented flooding in Hamilton or Peterborough, that is part of the cost.

Dr. Eric Hoskins, a new member of this Legislature, would be well aware of this issue. The United Nations referred to the war in Darfur as the first climate war because the reality was that this area in Africa had previously not been a hotbed of conflict, but as drought conditions intensified, a war developed as people fought over what resources were left. There's a lot on the heads of the oil and gas industry, and we are being asked to preserve them, keep them whole and let the rest of humanity pay the cost.

I have to say—for those who are here now waiting for another debate, many of you come from rural areas—that the reality is, when you look at the scientific studies, there's a projection that in Ontario over the next few decades we will lose the ability to carry on agriculture in many areas simply from rainfall. We will have to go to irrigation where the fresh water is available. Projections of reduction in agricultural production in Canada in grains and corn are in the 30% to 40% range in this century. For those who are already trying to farm in a difficult environment, a projection for a dramatic drop in agriculture production is bad news.

If you look at the studies done by the government of Canada about the substantial increase in the number of

forest fires in this country and the impact it will have on the forestry sector, I say that what we are facing is a dramatic reduction in the standard of living of most people in Canada in order to protect oil and gas and coal interests. Frankly, that is not defensible.

If we want to have a climate strategy that will make a difference, we have to go far beyond awareness. If you want to have something that's actually going to make a difference, you have to have something that's commercially, technologically and politically viable.

I have to say that, in this country, environmentalists have been too focused on the technologically viable, perhaps the commercially viable, and have forgotten what it takes to make something happen politically. In the end, that's the key piece.

I have to say that the oil and gas, coal and nuclear industries understand the political piece really well. I throw the nuclear industry in because investment in nuclear power sucks away the money that you need to actually invest to make a switch to renewable power. That's part of the reason that in the report from the Pembina Institute and the Suzuki Foundation they were saying, "Don't invest in nuclear power." In this province, we have a commitment to nuclear power that will cripple the transition to a green economy. That's a substantial issue.

The good news for all of us is that we can take a very different path, a very different direction, and we are in a situation of financial crisis, an economic crisis that, in fact, opens the door to rebuilding the economy here. We have people who are unemployed. We have interest rates at historically low levels. We have the need to renew our electricity infrastructure and, frankly, we need to renew our whole energy infrastructure. Too often in Ontario, we focus on electricity. We forget about oil, gas and coal.

In other jurisdictions, increasingly, they're thinking in those terms. In Toledo, Ohio, 6,000 people work in the solar industry—one city. People in academia, people in the commercial sector, manufacturing, people who used to make windshields are now making the glass for solar panels. In Michigan, the Democratic administration has taken advantage of money made available by the federal government to invest heavily in battery production for electric cars. They are making steps to build factories worth in the hundreds of millions of dollars to manufacture batteries in that state so they can have an electric car industry.

Here in Ontario, we have a climate change action plan that lacks action, a plan that lacks numbers and lacks respectable targets. Mr. McNeely was quite correct: The federal government doesn't respect the Kyoto targets; neither does the Ontario Liberal government. Its climate plan doesn't meet Kyoto and, for 2020, more than a decade out, doesn't meet the targets the United Nations says are necessary to at least stabilize the climate.

I have to say to you that I have no use for the Harper government's approach. It is one that one can condemn morally and ethically. But frankly, although it's packaged much more nicely with much better rhetoric, the McGuinty plan is just as limited and will not have the impact that we really need to transform our economy.

You have to know that other jurisdictions are beginning to understand that not only do we have a physical problem before us, but we have this extraordinarily promising manufacturing opportunity. China has committed to spending \$44 billion a year over the next decade to develop renewable power. They understand the market and manufacturing opportunity that's presented to them. South Korea, a much smaller jurisdiction, is planning to spend between \$8 billion and \$10 billion over the next decade to become leaders in two areas of the renewable power revolution. We're a small jurisdiction. We could be focused on a number of pieces of renewable energy and become leaders in North America. We are far too small in our thinking, far too limited in our thinking.

So when I respond to the private member's bill put forward, I say to the member: You're going to have to build a coalition of business, of labour and of government that will transform manufacturing in this province, much as the Conservatives at the beginning of the 20th century led the establishment of Ontario Hydro to set the basis for the industrialization of Ontario. I don't see that happening with this government. I see the carving out of a small piece of the electricity sector for renewable power. I voted in favour of the Green Energy Act. I thought that, small as it was, it was useful to do. But in terms of what has to happen both to take on climate change and to actually transform our economy in a fundamental way, that isn't what's before us.

Mr. McNeely, I thank you for bringing forward the bill. I think people need the information. But our problem is no longer a lack of awareness; our problem is a fundamental one—a lack of action.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Reza Moridi: I am pleased to rise in this House on behalf of the residents of my riding of Richmond Hill to speak on Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change, brought forward by my friend and colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans.

I wanted to begin by first applauding my colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans for bringing forward this bill. It's a bill most significant and much needed, given the kind of environmental crisis happening not only in Ontario but all over Canada and, in fact, the world.

Climate change has become a global issue and requires full co-operation across provinces, nations and countries. I'm sure everyone in this House is familiar with the Kyoto Protocol agreement, which was signed in 1997 by a total of 184 countries as part of an international initiative to address climate change. The agreement aimed at combatting global warming by significantly reducing the member nations' greenhouse emissions. This agreement was a significant step forward in our history, one that I hope will guide our society as a whole towards a more green-friendly culture.

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We are now in the year 2009, 12 years after signing the Kyoto Protocol. How much has changed? Where are we now in Canada? I am saddened to report that we are

in no better position than when that agreement was signed. Our greenhouse emissions increased by 27% between the years 1990 and 2004, and continue to rise. Our federal government has continuously ignored its obligations and has gone as far as to ignore a private member's bill that successfully passed in the House of Commons in February 2007, which would ensure that Canada take effective and timely action to meet its obligations under the Kyoto Protocol and help address the problem of global climate change. It also set out that the government prepare a climate change plan on an annual basis, another provision that has been ignored by our federal government. This continuous ignorance on the pressing issue of climate change must stop. We must move forward and help prepare the next generation for the challenges awaiting them, and this takes me to my next point.

I would like to particularly commend the member from Ottawa—Orléans for the attention he has brought to the importance and significance of public education with regard to climate change. Protecting the environment by passing laws and bringing forward legislation is all very good, but education is the key, particularly the education of our younger generation. With the ever-increasing availability of technology, we have an obligation to educate our children. By such education, children can find information on any topic they are interested in. From Google to Facebook, the new wave of information technology has given us a great tool in educating our children.

However, it seems that the topic of climate change must be brought to the attention of our children in schools. As a government, we should do whatever we can to make sure that our young people are fully aware of the importance of climate change, in particular, and of environmental issues in general. I'm certain that this will occur with the passing of this bill.

The issue of climate change is a non-partisan issue. The threat to our environment is very clear, and is becoming more and more present in our daily lives. I hope that everyone in this House can look past political lines and support Bill 208. We must take the threat of climate change seriously and make the necessary changes to ensure the safety and health of future generations.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Leeanna Pendergast: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon and to support my colleague the member from Ottawa—Orléans on this bill, An Act to increase awareness of climate change, which looks at engaging young people, specifically schoolchildren, in the process of environmental awareness.

When I listen to the debate today, I hear the opposition and the third party saying, "We have to go past awareness." Well, fair enough. And we have. We have gone past the awareness piece, and I think that Bill 208 just continues to build on this. The preamble of the bill states, "It is vital that Ontario's young people be made aware of the direction we are going as a province, a nation and a

planet, with respect to climate change.” No one could argue with that. That’s absolutely a fact. It is vital that our students understand that. So I thought it would be helpful, in support of the bill today, to take a look at what we already do in the education system that supports this and look at this as a springboard of next steps and where we go from here.

On June 22, 2007, our Minister of Education, the Honourable Kathleen Wynne, accepted the report of a working group that was presented to the curriculum council, called *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*. That report made 32 recommendations—policy development, leadership and accountability, curriculum, teaching—and I’m proud to say that the government will be moving ahead on all 32 of those recommendations.

The ministry has developed an environmental education policy framework entitled *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow*. It’s in accordance with recommendation number one from the *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future* document. The goal of this policy framework is that by the end of grade 12, students will develop the knowledge, the skills, the perspectives and practices they need to participate as environmentally conscious and environmentally responsible citizens at a global level, at a national level, and, as we stand here and represent our ridings—mine of Kitchener–Conestoga—absolutely at a local level, and what they can do in their schools, which takes us back to Bill 208.

This government believes that the environmental education policy must encourage and support an Ontario education system that delivers effective environmental education, but at the same time models environmentally responsible practices. And how do we do that? We go to our youth, we go to our students in our schools, and we model these practices. We teach them this, and it becomes a way of life for them that they carry into the future.

Speaking of the future—that was an unintended segue—I wanted to give a quote from Roberta Bondar, who was chair of the working group that made the 32 recommendations that were accepted by the minister. Dr. Bondar said, “After observing the planet for eight days from space, I have a deeper interest and respect for the forces that shape our world. Each particle of soil, each plant and animal is special. I also marvel at the creativity and ingenuity of our own species, but at the same time, I wonder why we all cannot see that we create our future each day, and that our local actions affect the global community, today as well as for generations to come.”

Throughout the document, the recommendation is that schools and—of course, the statement is that schools have a vital role to play in preparing our young people to take their place as informed, engaged and empowered citizens who will be pivotal in shaping the future of our communities, our province, our country and our global environment, and Bill 208 today continues to move forward with that in increasing awareness of climate change. As a result, students will understand the fundamental connection between their place in the world and

the larger world around them, in relationship to their responsibility to food, water, energy, air, land and the interaction with all living things. The education system, as a result, will provide opportunities within the classroom for students to become engaged in actions that will deepen this understanding.

We’ve heard from the member from Ottawa–Orléans that this is also a mechanism by which to engage students across the province to become actively involved in this pursuit of environmental education, that is absolutely crucial to the development and the formulation and the formation—the morphology, really—of how our future will look.

Part of the springboard for Bill 208 includes what we already do in the ministry in terms of what students should know in environmental education as part of the curriculum; teachers receiving the knowledge and skills they need to model and mentor for the students; learning; and schools’ ability to provide not just an education for students and parents but for the larger community.

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As I run out of time, I direct us back to the bill. The bill looks at—no single person, community, country or continent alone is responsible, but we need to do this all together as a community.

I commend my colleague today on bringing forward Bill 208.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. McNeely, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Phil McNeely: I wish to thank the members from Haldimand–Norfolk, Toronto–Danforth, Richmond Hill and Kitchener–Conestoga for their remarks on this bill.

I’d like to start off by stating Ontario’s position, because I have been close to it over the last few years. I’m really pleased that we are moving ahead and we’re closing the coal-fired plants. I think that is tremendous. That is a major undertaking. We have to thank the people of Ontario, because that’s going to be costing every taxpayer dollars to do what is right.

The Green Energy Act, brought in by Minister Smitherman, has really taken us forward in renewables and in conservation. This is very important. Now we have the cap-and-trade legislation that we’ll be debating, I understand, next week.

The targets set by Ontario are targets below the 1990 levels. It’s 6% by 2014, 15% by 2020, and 80% below the 1990 levels by 2050. I think those targets are tough targets, and they’re targets that we’re moving forward to meet.

The people who spoke to the bill today all made important comments, and I certainly liked the comments from the member from Kitchener–Conestoga that relate it to the curriculum in schools, and how I think it’s very important that we get our youth a lot more aware of what’s happening. They’re ready; they’ve helped us with many environmental challenges and they will continue to do so.

In the late 1980s David Suzuki referred to global warming as “a slow-motion catastrophe,” one they ex-

pected to kick in in perhaps generations, but only two decades later, we see that's different. I hope today's discussion moves forward the considerations on the environment.

I thank you, Speaker, for this opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes.

WIND TURBINES

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the province of Ontario must impose a moratorium on all new wind turbine projects in Ontario until such time as Ontario's chief medical officer of health, the Ministry of Health ... and the Ministry of the Environment have stated that wind turbines do not have any adverse health effects on people who live near them.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Murdoch moves private members' notice of motion number 116. Pursuant to standing order number 98, Mr. Murdoch, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: First I'd just like to tell the assembly how this happened. I have a good friend and mate here, John O'Toole, who phoned me a couple of weeks ago. John wanted to change private members' bills with me. At that point I really hadn't thought of mine—mine was going to be in November—and I actually told John no. But as most people here will know, John O'Toole is pretty persistent, so he decided to phone me himself. When I got that, I thought, "Well, he must really want to change, and he must have some ideas." I was at home and I had to think. It didn't take me too long, though, to think about what I would do. I phoned John back and said, "Hey, I've got an idea."

You see, for some time now, my offices at Queen's Park and Owen Sound have been getting letters and calls from people living near industrial wind turbines, about the noise levels making them sick. The people who live close to these massive structures are complaining about experiencing a number of health problems, most commonly sleep—how do you say that word?

Interjection: Deprivation.

Mr. Bill Murdoch:—deprivation—I'd better say that word right, because we want to know what it is—cardiac problems, nausea, severe headaches. All of the negative health effects experienced by these people have been compiled and reported on in several published reports, which I'm sure most of you have either read or heard about. One of the published reports is on the way to your offices. It'll come in a green folder. I've taken the liberty of mailing it to everyone in this assembly so that you will get a copy of it. Hopefully you will read it.

I initially told the constituents there was nothing within my legislative power that I could do to help change the situation: I could not scrap the Green Energy Act. After explaining this fact to them, I'd always refer them to the man in charge of the energy file, Mr. George Smitherman, the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, who has been handed sweeping powers and absolute

control over industrial wind projects in Ontario. As you know, when we passed Bill 150 you gave George all the power he needs and overruled any municipalities which may have different ideas. They may want to look at some of these things, but this assembly, when it voted in favour of Bill 150, gave the power to the minister. I told the people, my constituents, that he was the only one who could mitigate their suffering by undoing the regulations, changing the setbacks and ordering these massive wind structures to be erected further away from peoples' homes. But his office dithered and nothing was done.

When I called back my friend the member for Durham, I told him I was going to introduce a resolution to call for a moratorium on wind farm development in Ontario until such time as our chief medical officer of health of Ontario stated publicly that wind turbines are not making people sick. Now, I feel that she should be in control of this, because if we're going to make people sick by doing something, then she's going to get this on her lap to sort out. As you know, when SARS comes along or any of the other problems we have, it always goes to our chief medical officer, so I believe that she should be in the loop on this. If she doesn't have problems maybe there are no problems, but we'll get to her just a little later on here.

Since announcing my intention to do this, many members of this House have approached me to say, "You know, this is a good idea." I wish they'd thought of it first, especially John. John O'Toole is always telling me things like that, because John just had one of his bills pass: the cellphone bill. That was John O'Toole's idea, but the government of the day took it; it took a good idea from a Conservative and made it law. I don't know whether it's such a good idea or not, but I didn't get a chance—I wasn't here the day they voted on it; I may not have. But John was the one who thought about that, so you've got to give John credit.

The first member to say that to me was the member from Durham. You will hear from some of them in a short while. Some you have already heard from, such as member Lisa MacLeod from Nepean-Carleton. She spoke about the effects of wind turbines in this House the other day and she supports my resolution, along with my friend in the chair today, Jim Wilson, who doesn't get a chance to debate it today because he is in the chair doing his job, but he has indicated to me that he would support this resolution if he had a chance.

Also, my resolution has been supported by Grey Bruce medical officer of health Dr. Hazel Lynn. She's been at many of the meetings that have happened in my constituency and said there seem to be people who have problems with this, but it's not her mandate to do anything at this time. But if the chief medical officer of Ontario takes it as her mandate, then she will get involved, and I understand from the chief medical officer that she, in the very near future, is going to have a meeting with the other medical officers across Ontario to discuss this very project.

As you know, a lot of your constituents have come to different members, all members—maybe not so much the

members in the big cities, but all the rural members and northern members here must have been contacted by some of these people, because we have them in the House today from all over Ontario. It's not just Grey and Bruce; this is an Ontario problem, and it's all to do with the Green Energy Act and what the regulations say. They ignored the people who said they had problems with this and went ahead and gave all the powers to one minister to go ahead and put them wherever he feels like.

We talked about the chief medical officer of health. A member from the Ministry of Health's so-called—what do they call him? He was not an adviser; he had come out with whatever he felt that the minister should say. But this gentleman two days ago told the media—

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: It's called a spin doctor.

1530

Mr. Bill Murdoch: Spin doctor: Is that what they're called? Yes, I guess so. I was trying to be nice so far, but the spin doctors in the government.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: You're trying to be nice?

Mr. Bill Murdoch: So far, anyway. I'm hoping the government will vote for this resolution today, because it's not a hard resolution to vote for. If you're going to make people sick, maybe we should look at that before we continue on. It's not a hard thing to do.

But anyway, the spin doctors from the Ministry of Health informed the media that our chief medical officer was onside. He said absolutely, she was. If you don't believe me, look at some reports. Lorrie Goldstein in the Toronto Sun wrote that. He said he asked this gentleman and he said, "Absolutely, she's onside." Isn't this funny? Yesterday, the chief medical officer was in estimates and she was asked if she was onside. She said, "No, we're still studying it." That's right from her. So somebody at the ministry is leading us astray.

You wouldn't want to say they lied; it would be bad to say something like that, and I never want to say that in the House, but something happened. They got a different opinion. Something must have happened. Mr. Speaker, I wouldn't want to get you upset by anything like that and I would never say that anybody in this House would do that, but somebody who maybe works for people in this House may have done that. At least they misled the media and said that she's onside. But yesterday, in a committee hearing—it was estimates, and Christine Elliott asked a question. Let's see; we'll just find it here.

This is what the member for Whitby—Oshawa, Ms. Elliott, asked the chief medical officer of health during estimates on Tuesday, October 27: "So at the moment you don't have a formal position?" Response: "No, we're still reviewing."

That fits right in with my resolution. All I'm saying is that we put a moratorium on any new wind turbines until the medical officer of health for Ontario gets a chance to come up with her opinion of whether there are problems with it or there aren't problems with it. I'm not a doctor, so I don't know. But you see a lot of people here who claim that they have problems, so they can't all be dreaming. There must be something to this.

I don't know whether we need a new report and somebody to run around Ontario to look at a report, because there must be tons of them out of Europe. There are all kinds of windmills in Europe. Do we need to do that? I'm not sure, but let the medical officer tell us what she wants. Until she does that, I'm claiming that we shouldn't build any new ones, because in the McGuinty era, as I understand it, he wants, what is it, 7,000 of them so he can get rid of the coal-fired generators? Which he promised to do, which he hasn't done—another broken promise. Maybe he doesn't want 7,000 turbines; I don't know. You can't believe him. He tells you one thing and does something different. But if they even want 1,000 more by next year, does that mean there are going to be 2,000 or 3,000 people sick? I don't know, but that's why we have a chief medical officer here: to tell us. I think we had better stop.

I've been told, "If we put a moratorium on, there are all these jobs that are going to be lost," and things like this. If we lose a job but we keep somebody from getting sick, I think that's a heck of a lot better. I don't think jobs should override people getting sick. The other one I heard was, "If we close down the coal-fired generating plants, we'll make people better." Maybe that's true, but do we make other people sick just because we're going to close them down and put in all these wind farms? I'm not one to say that they're going to make them sick, but I think that's why we have a chief medical officer: to do that.

I think that's what should be done, and I would hope that in this House, like-minded people—we're all here to look after people in Ontario. It's not just Grey, Bruce and Owen Sound; we're looking after everybody in rural and northern Ontario. I understand there's one to go down here in the city in the Scarborough Bluffs, if I'm not mistaken. There's someone in Ms. Best's riding, so I'm sure she'll be here to vote for this and tell us what she wants done. That's why I think we need a moratorium.

The other thing is, if you don't put a moratorium on, then we'll drag it out forever. Should we produce more wind farms just because we want to drag it out and because they need more? I don't think we should be doing that. I think we should put a moratorium on and find out the facts before we do any more. So I thank you, Mr. Speaker, for being able to talk.

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I know Bill's popular, but I'll just remind you that you can't clap or participate in the debate, please.

The honourable member for Oak Ridges—Markham.

Ms. Helena Jaczek: It's my pleasure to enter into what I think is a very important debate which is occurring this afternoon. I would like to thank the member for Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound in bringing this concern forward. I want to acknowledge the concern, which is entirely valid. Many constituents obviously across Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound feel very strongly on this issue, and many Ontarians are also extremely concerned about the health effects of wind turbines, whether there are any. They want some debate on the matter.

I think I can understand this fully. I am the former medical officer of health for York region. In that capacity, I often had to look at situations where there might be some scientific ambiguity and respond in a responsible way to those concerns. I think we know that when people see 18-metre wind turbines dotting the landscape, they are naturally anxious about any potential health effects. I'm very familiar with the precautionary principle that, at all possible times, we do not want to inflict any harm on the population. I used that as the former medical officer of health as it related to electromagnetic fields from high-voltage transmission lines.

When I was appointed parliamentary assistant to the Minister of the Environment, this was actually one of the first areas that I wanted to look at and be briefed on. What I found was that there was a very excellent review of the evidence by Dr. Ray Copes and Karen Rideout from the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health, which is an arm's-length agency funded by the Public Health Agency of Canada. They conducted this review on behalf of the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion. They looked specifically at the areas of concern, in particular, sound, noise levels, intensity, low-frequency noise, infrasound, electromagnetic field exposure, shadow, flicker, icing of the turbine blades, structural failure and so on, and they came to a conclusion. They came to several, but the one that I want to address at this point, because I know many of my colleagues want to enter into this debate, was their conclusion that, based on best available evidence, any identified risk can be addressed through siting or setbacks and operating practices.

I was pleased to learn—and I'm sure this will be very reassuring for the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound—that, in fact, the chief medical officer of health, Dr. Arlene King, on October 21 this year, wrote to medical officers of health and environmental health directors. I'll quote directly from her letter:

"The public health division, in collaboration of the Ministry of the Environment and Energy and Infrastructure and with the Ontario Agency for Health Protection and Promotion, has reviewed the concerns expressed by some regarding health impacts of wind turbines, specifically wind turbine farms. A status update is being provided at this time so as to support common levels of information and public communication."

She goes on to say, "The literature review revealed that while there are anecdotal reports of symptoms such as sleep disturbance, headaches, dizziness, anxiety, concentration and learning problems, and tinnitus"—that's ringing in your ears—"there is no scientific evidence, to date, to demonstrate a causal association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects. A few Swedish studies reported that noise from wind turbines is annoying to some people."

1540

I know that the member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound referred to some comments made by Dr. King at the estimates committee, and I do have, from that

transcript from October 27, a clarification that she gave to some of her previous comments. In response to Mr. Jim Brownell's question related to a causal association between turbine noise and adverse health effects, Dr. King said the following:

"Yes, in terms of the existing literature right now, we have not found an association between adverse health effects and wind turbines. We're continuing, again, to review that information, as I said earlier, and determine where there may be gaps in the literature that exist in order to be able to develop a common view among myself and all of my medical officer of health colleagues across our province."

Our government has made very stringent setbacks to address the concern raised by Dr. Copes—550 metres—with noise at the periphery of the property of 40 decibels.

We are also absolutely committed to establishing a research chair in conjunction with the Ontario council of universities. This is not the time for us to succumb to analysis paralysis; it is the time for us to move forward based on what we know, and I can assure this House that in my capacity as parliamentary assistant to the Ministry of the Environment, I will be urging the establishment of that research chair at the earliest opportunity.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Toby Barrett: I welcome the opportunity to talk to this one, and I want to say at the outset that I support this resolution in its intention. As you know, it's a resolution to provide some answers to questions with respect to health and the impact of these wind turbines, given the deluge of disturbing reports of the effects from those and many people in my area in Haldimand-Norfolk. I know people are here today from my area who live in close proximity to these provincially approved wind turbines, and given the reported plans locally for another 200 or more turbines on or adjacent to Lake Erie—there are plans for 200 to be built offshore. We already have—and I haven't counted them all; I'm not sure—80 or 90 that stretch from Lowbanks, Dunnville, right through to the Port Burwell area in Elgin county.

Given that, I do feel it's incumbent on this government, as the resolution states, to impose a moratorium on all new wind turbine projects in Ontario until such time as the chief medical officer of health, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of the Environment have stated that wind turbines do not have any adverse health effects on the people who live near them.

If the minister is confident that there is no health impact, then we very simply ask: Say so, tell us. Let us know definitively. If not, it bears investigation, and there's nothing wrong with neutral, objective, research evidence. We're not scientists. Bodies of work are out there, and for us to make decisions, we need those kinds of facts. The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound indicated that the government has a responsibility as well as a mandate to investigate such claims. We've heard the claims of sleep deprivation, heart palpitations, things like that.

Mr. McGuinty did promise a number of months ago to set up an academic research chair. I think that's a good idea. I spent 20 years with a research organization, and it's incumbent on us to have access to the best scientific information available. Regrettably, we know this government's track record as far as keeping promises; there is no research chair. I don't know whether the Premier has any real intention of keeping that one, and providing us with the resultant scientific information that has been promised to us.

Many of us in rural Ontario call these turbines neighbours—they're 300 feet tall. You don't really have to be a scientist to question the possible impact of not only the massive arms of these turbines, but the generator itself. You can hear the dull roar, the grinding of the gears, the mechanical mechanism within these structures. I don't have the answers to a lot of this. I think it's important that we be provided with this kind of information.

We've heard of Dr. Robert McMurtry, former dean of medicine, University of Western Ontario. He has called on the province to undertake an independent epidemiological study on whether noise and low-frequency vibrations do have a negative impact on health.

I'll just cut to the chase. I know other people are speaking. One person here today, Stephana Johnston from Clear Creek, is in the visitors' gallery. I think everybody knows where Clear Creek is, down on Lake Erie. She has a proposal. A turbine town needs to be purchased as an experimental facility: "Is it ideal? With 18 [turbines] within a three-kilometre radius of a few varied types of residences, some of the present residents might volunteer to stay on as guinea pigs for the experimental phase.

"The design of the experiment would have to be done with extreme care by an arm's-length neutral research body so that all sides of the debate will be convinced with the results.

"Let's stop the nickel-and-dime waste, the Mickey Mouse measurements and get down to the really hard work of a conclusive experiment here."

I agree.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I appreciate the opportunity to speak today.

I have to say first off that I have tremendous respect for Mr. Murdoch, and I'm not being coy or playing games. You may be one of the shrewdest political people in this House. I've watched your career. You've survived purges, you've survived faith-based funding for schools, so obviously you're a man who tests the political currents on a regular basis.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: He had his own independent party.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Yes. He may be one of the only fourth-party members in this House who has gone through election cycles and come back triumphant. I disagree with you but I respect you.

There are people who have come here today who travelled a good distance. They didn't come here because

they like travelling; they came here because they have serious concerns, and I say to them, with great respect, that I disagree with you, but I also recognize that you're not here on a frivolous basis; you're here because you have a point of view that you want to have expressed, and I think Mr. Murdoch has done you well in doing that.

I'm in a situation where I have actually had an opportunity to listen to a number of these arguments and debates. I had the opportunity—the honour—to sit on the committee that travelled around Ontario and listened to the presentations on the Green Energy Act, listened to people who were dealing with a variety of problems, both with wind turbines and other forms of generation. I can see a member from south Mississauga who is here, who is dealing with a proposed gas-fired power plant in his riding. I have had to have that battle myself, and I know that when people are dealing with technologies, questions come up—substantial questions, sometimes; not substantial otherwise, but questions that people clearly care about.

There were people who came to the Green Energy Act hearings from rural areas—farmers—who wanted wind turbines built on their properties because they wanted the revenue to help ensure they could stay on the land. I have had farmers call me who are upset by the setbacks put in place by this provincial government because they wanted more wind turbines on their land so that they could stay on that land.

In the state of Iowa in the United States, the wind industry is a substantial part of that agricultural state's economy. Farmers refer to the wind turbines as their second harvest. I had an opportunity a few years ago to work in Ottawa as a climate adviser to Jack Layton. I had an opportunity then to meet with farmers from Pincher Creek, Alberta. They were there on the Hill lobbying for more wind investment because they said, as cattle farmers, those farmers—

Interruption.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'd just remind the members in the gallery: Please do not participate in the debate. Thank you.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Those farmers from Pincher Creek said that if they had not had wind turbines on their property, they would have lost their farms; they would have lost cattle operations that had been in their families for generations. They wanted that investment so that they could maintain the rural life that they valued so profoundly.

1550

I have to say to you that there is no point in telling people that they don't feel something they feel, and if people here feel irritated by, sick from or annoyed with wind turbines, they simply feel that.

I'm going to set out my arguments and do it in the best way I can to ensure that people who listen to this understand where I'm coming from and where my party is coming from.

We face substantial public health problems in Ontario. The Ontario Medical Association has projected that

something like 9,000 people a year die in Ontario from air pollution—9,000. That's a lot of deaths. And there are many who are sickened. If you have 9,000 die, you probably have tens of thousands who have asthma, who have heart problems, who have respiratory problems, who have to go to the hospital. The OMA calculates the cost of that smog in the billions of dollars in this province. So we face a very substantial public health issue right now. This is not something that we need to debate. Everyone in the House can read the medical literature; they can see the simple reality. We have to move very quickly to move away from fossil fuels in this province because people are being killed by the fossil fuel effluent that we dump into the atmosphere.

There is a desperate need to move on climate change. For those who were here for the earlier debate, I won't go through all of the issues that were put on the table. I can say in passing that in this province and in this country, inaction on climate change will mean a substantial drop in our standard of living. It will mean a further impoverishment of rural Ontario. It will mean substantial reductions in forest cover in this province and all the implications it has for the remaining forest industry. Those two necessities, those two issues, drive the need to rapidly transition to an economy that's based on renewable power, and wind power is one of the most advanced, most developed technologies that we have at hand to move rapidly.

On that basis alone—the need to deal with thousands of deaths and to head off the loss of stability in our society—I support rapid deployment of wind power. In fact, I have publicly said in my riding, in this city, that I support wind power in my riding. And quite frankly, as many in this House will know, I fought aggressively against the gas-fired power plant in my riding and know without any doubt whatsoever that my constituents would have supported wind turbines in the riding, and that they understand, from their experience with the one wind turbine we have in this city—and we need many more—the implications and the advantages to them of having more wind power in urban environments.

I've had an opportunity over the last decade and a half to speak with environmentalists in Europe, to talk with those who have, since the early 1980s, lived in a situation where more and more wind turbines have been deployed—in some areas of Denmark, at a level far denser than anything we see here in Ontario. I've talked to people whose primary focus in their environmental activity is population health, who research toxic chemicals, who work on new developments, new problems with toxic chemicals.

Wind turbines are not an issue as a health issue in European jurisdictions. There are disputes. I won't argue that. There are very different views on how the landscape should look. There are very different feelings about how the wind turbines should be owned, but in my personal conversations with people—and frankly, in asking the legislative library to do the research and bring me the reports from the Journal of the American Medical Asso-

ciation, the Lancet and others, I don't see in the literature any epidemiological evidence that, in fact, we have a health problem that one could classify at the same level as what we're getting from air pollution now.

If there is a problem and if people are here, they must be experiencing something. I have to say that the symptoms that have been described are similar to those I experience as a city resident living on a very busy street. There is noise, and it is unpredictable; sometimes loud, sometimes quiet. I found it very annoying to live on busy streets. It just is; that's the reality.

I've disagreed with Mr. Murdoch, and I've disagreed with the argument that has been made. I want to talk about potential common ground; we can spend all our time arguing, but I always find it a lot more productive to set out, "Okay, so where can we go?" To those who are concerned about far greater investment in wind turbines, who want to limit the amount of investment we have in generation in this society, I say there is common ground to push this Liberal government and any government that happens to be elected in the future to dramatically accelerate efforts at energy efficiency. A number of reports have come forward in the last few years credibly saying that you could cut electricity consumption in this province by 40%. That would have a substantial impact on future investment in any form of generation technology. That is of consequence for us.

Those of you, like Mr. Murdoch, who are concerned about the issue of power generation should be aware that this government doesn't have that as a goal. It should have that as a goal. I support the investment in wind, but even more, I support the investment in energy efficiency. You should know—Mr. Murdoch may know—that when we had the Green Energy Act hearings, we had credible testimony that the energy efficiency codes for buildings in this province are not enforced. When new buildings are built that are electrically heated or cooled, the building code for efficiency is not enforced, which drives up the amount of power needed, which drives up the amount of generation that's invested in. There needs to be credible enforcement of the energy efficiency code.

We need to be looking at cogeneration. Right now there are hospitals across this province that run boilers 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Those hospitals could be making power at the same time they are making heat. They'd provide themselves with emergency power and feed power into the grid. It would not increase the burden on our environment, and it would reduce the demand for new electricity generation. The strategy of energy efficiency, of maximizing the use of any fuel we do burn, is a way one could find common ground to reduce the amount of new generation capacity that is invested in, in this province.

This is going to be an ongoing question, because people will disagree about land use zoning and disagree about this technology. But we in this province have to take action to make sure we clean up the air in this province. One of the best avenues we have right now, one of the fastest to deploy and least expensive, aside

from energy efficiency, is wind, and we need to take that option.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I want to thank the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound for his motives in bringing forward this resolution. Protecting public health and safety is, of course, one of the most important duties we have as legislators. I want to thank the people who made the long trek down to Queen’s Park, who are here because they believe in the issues they are fighting for.

The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care listened to individuals and groups with concerns about wind turbines. I don’t want to get into that, because my learned colleague Dr. Helena Jaczek has gone into the health issues in the debate today. I want to speak more as an engineer and as someone who has been working with the Green Energy Act, and more on the setbacks—the setbacks have been established across this province. I want to talk more about the reasons that Ontario strongly supports wind power in the first place.

We just heard from the member for Toronto–Danforth about the reasons we have to get more clean energy available for Ontario and get rid of dirty coal. His records show that there are 9,000 deaths on an annual basis from coal-fired plants. We’ve talked about that since 2003 and we’re getting very close. I believe that we’re at about 40% or 50% reduction in coal-fired plants in this province already, and we’ll have no more coal in 2014.

1600

These turbines are helping to replace electricity currently produced by burning coal. “The impact of Ontario’s coal closure plan will reduce Ontario’s carbon dioxide emissions by up to 30 megatonnes” and all those other emissions that affect health that also go with it.

We know that there are serious and direct impacts on human health from burning coal. That’s why wind energy is being promoted so much by our province.

I have to leave sufficient time for the other member to speak to it, but I would just like to again thank the member for bringing this forward. It’s an important motion and it’s important that this has the opportunity to be before us today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I am pleased to speak and support the resolution today. Although I don’t have any wind farms proposed in my riding, I am supporting Ontarians who have had democracy pulled out from under them and also from under their local municipalities.

Much like myself, I’m certain that Premier McGuinty, his Minister of Energy and Infrastructure and his caucus colleagues are hearing from thousands of Ontarians with respect to their very serious concerns about the unstudied adverse health effects of wind turbines. They’re hearing from you, but they’re not listening and they’re certainly not acting. They are in their thinking place.

Regardless of these concerns, this government is continuing to go down the road of approval for construction of future wind farm projects without taking into consideration the concerns you’ve raised.

I cannot argue the importance of renewable energy, but without proper, conclusive scientific studies, I cannot speak to the placement of these wind turbines.

I am sure that the Premier and his Minister of Energy and Infrastructure are aware of the many reports that have looked at the potential adverse effects of wind turbines. Experts like Dr. Robert McMurtry, the former dean of medicine at the University of Western Ontario, say that more than 100 people informally surveyed and others around the world living close to turbines have complained about similar symptoms: sleep deprivation, cardiac arrhythmia, nausea, heart palpitations and severe headaches, to name a few. Dr. Harrison, professor emeritus in physics at Queen’s University, says, “Wind turbine noise causes annoyance and health problems. These problems include sleeplessness; anxiety; headaches and migraines; depression; and an accentuation of learning disabilities.”

If the Premier and his minister are not going to listen to the recommendations and warnings in the various reports that have been completed, then my question is, what studies have they done that look into the potential health effects of industrial wind turbines? What is the government doing to address the concerns of Ontarians? What studies have they done and where are these studies?

I think we all know the answer is that the McGuinty Liberals have not done any studies, despite the fact that they said they would. Back in May of this year, this government said that they would establish an academic research chair to examine potential public health effects of renewable energy projects. But to this date, we’ve heard that Minister Gerretsen says that his government is still “looking for the right university” for this position. That was in September. Now it’s almost November, and the wind projects continue to be approved and constructed.

Ontario has a long list of great universities that excel in academic excellence. The Premier and his minister should just choose one and move on with this immediately.

Perhaps the delay is caused by the fact that the Premier and his minister are more familiar with having their work done by Liberal friends, as we saw in the eHealth scandal, friends who will give them the conclusion they want. Nonetheless, they need to take action and they need to take it today. Ontarians are looking for answers now, and this government has an obligation to provide them these answers before continuing to approve more wind turbine projects without understanding the adverse health effects.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I’m pleased to rise today to support this important resolution brought forward by my colleague the member from Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound.

I want to make it clear that I support green energy. Being involved in agriculture, I know how important is the relationship that we have with our land and how we depend on it. But as we move forward, we need to make smart decisions about our environment and our hydro system. We cannot just blindly support everything that's labelled green.

This resolution is not against, or for, wind turbines; it's simply saying that we can't proceed without doing the proper scientific research to ensure that the health of Ontarians is protected.

Last week, I had the opportunity to meet with a number of citizens from Oxford who are concerned about wind turbines and their impact on the health of nearby residents. I want to thank this group for the work they have done to ensure that my colleagues and I are fully briefed on the issue—and a great number of them are in the gallery today.

I don't have the time to go into all the research that they've provided, but it is clear that there are a number of serious issues about turbines that need to be answered fully and scientifically before we move forward with any more projects.

There are three different proposals of wind turbine developments in Oxford. With three different developers, the one thing that is consistent is that residents are worried about the impact of turbines on their health, and they are not getting satisfactory answers from the provincial government. In fact, hundreds of my constituents signed petitions supporting the idea of a moratorium on building turbines until their concerns are addressed. And I hope in the coming weeks to present those petitions to the Legislature.

All those people and the people in the gallery today have valid concerns. I know that all the members of this Legislature have received e-mails from families who live near wind turbines, and they have told us about the health problems that are driving them from their homes.

Through regulation, the minister has established a setback of 550 metres. Ontarians don't know if this is correct, nor do I. We are not scientists, and we haven't done the in-depth research to know what distance is safe. Perhaps the people can live closer to turbines. Maybe people shouldn't be living within a kilometre or two of the turbines. We just don't know.

Unless the government has done a full study to this issue that they aren't sharing with us, I don't think they know either. Doesn't it make sense to answer those questions before you build more turbines and before we allow companies to invest money in planning and developing these projects?

If we don't determine the health impacts and establish proper scientific setbacks, what do we do when we find out that 550 metres is too close? Does the government pay to move families that are suffering? Do we compensate the companies for building turbines they can't operate? Do we force the company to take the loss and go back and send the message that Ontario is not a good

place to invest? We owe it to Ontarians, especially the people who live near turbines, to ensure that they have done the proper research—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

We're almost done, people in the gallery, so you'll want to stick around for the vote.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: Before I make my own comments, I was asked by my colleague from Huron-Bruce to read a statement into the record for her:

"I will not be supporting this resolution by the member for Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound.

"During the public hearings for the Green Energy Act, no science-based evidence was brought forward to suggest that wind turbine developments were causing adverse health effects. It has been further confirmed by the chief medical officer of health that, based on all scientific evidence gathered to date, there exists nothing that would demonstrate a casual association between wind turbine noise and adverse health effects.

"Several of my constituents have concerns regarding their specific properties. To that end, I have made a written request to the Minister of the Environment to make certain that their outstanding concerns are addressed as a top priority of the academic research chair."

I myself have, over time, as a member, but also just as a farmer, watched and read and listened to a variety of research documents and many discussion papers, and I've even had the opportunity to get papers from the Netherlands to see what they are doing there because, of course, they have had wind turbines far longer than we have here.

1610

The one thing I've noticed over and over again is that there's not only a large volume of research, documentation and anecdotal information, but a lot of it conflicts and a lot of it doesn't always agree. I'm reminded of the fact that when I first brought forward the stray voltage bill, having good scientific data and research was really important and really critical in terms of a statement of opinion. We needed to be able to prove that something existed before we could approach the remediation of that issue.

So I find that it was very important to have that kind of research done, and I was really pleased when the Minister of the Environment said that he was going to establish a research chair. As some have pointed out—they're saying, "Well, what happened to the research chair?" Actually, I have here a press release from the Council of Ontario Universities, in which they say, "The Council of Ontario Universities today announced that it will launch a competitive process on behalf of the Ontario government for one chair in renewable energy technologies and health and two chairs in green chemistry and engineering." We are moving forward with this, and when someone said, "Well, is it going to be picked by the minister or by the Premier?"—I think having this work done by the Council of Ontario Universities and having it tendered is much more appropriate. So we are moving forward in that direction.

I have had in my riding a number of proposals for wind turbines. I also have existing wind turbine farms. There have been public meetings in my communities. There was one very recently in Adelaide Metcalfe. I was unable to attend because it was a Tuesday night and we were here in Toronto, but my staff was there and they came back and they heard from people and heard their concerns.

I want to say thank you to the member from Bruce—Grey—Owen Sound because I do think we need to debate this. I think that we—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you.

Mr. Murdoch, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I want to thank the three Liberal members from Lambton—Kent—Middlesex, Ottawa—Orléans and Oak Ridges—Markham, and just say that all I can do is go by what was quoted by the chief medical officer. I know they keep saying that she wrote a letter that she didn't think there were any concerns, but yesterday when she was asked—and I'm just quoting from this: "So at the moment you don't have a formal position?" And her response was, "No"—well, no means no. You guys got that now? That's what I understood: no means no—"we're still reviewing...." So it means that she doesn't have a position; at least that's what I would take from "no." I think that our medical officer doesn't have a position at this time. That's why I'm saying that we need to put a moratorium on this because, do we have the right here to make people sick because of something we do?

The Toronto—Danforth member, Peter—I appreciate the kind words and that; he's a great politician and he works hard, but in Toronto you've got one windmill—one of them. One. So what do you give a damn about it? You don't. You've got one bloody windmill. We've got them all in rural Ontario. That's what we're upset about. They're all in rural Ontario. They're not down here in Toronto, so it's easy for him to say—and I agree with all he said about how we need to have better sources of electricity and things like that. All of that was nice, nice and green and nice to say, but he's from Toronto—one bloody windmill down here. It's all he's got. I mean, what are we doing here, folks?

I want to thank the three members who spoke on my behalf from the party. I've got to mention John Yakabuski—you're just lucky he wasn't here; John wanted me to mention that he worked really hard on this thing too.

So folks, one—remember that; there's only one of those things down here.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll vote on Mr. Murdoch's item after we vote on the two previous items that are before us this afternoon.

The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES AMENDMENT ACT (RENTAL INSURANCE), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION (ASSURANCE DES LOYERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will first deal with ballot item 40, standing in the name of Mr. Prue.

Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 209, An Act to amend the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006, with respect to landlords' obligation to provide rental insurance. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

We will have a five-minute bell after we deal with the next two ballot items.

CLIMATE CHANGE AWARENESS ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SENSIBILISATION AUX CHANGEMENTS CLIMATIQUES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item 41, standing in the name of Mr. McNeely.

Mr. McNeely has moved second reading of Bill 208, An Act to increase awareness of climate change. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it. Carried.

Second reading agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. McNeely?

Mr. Phil McNeely: I would like the bill sent to the Standing Committee on General Government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it agreed that the bill be sent to the Standing Committee on General Government?

So ordered.

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item 42, standing in the name of Mr. Murdoch.

Mr. Murdoch has moved private member's notice of motion 116. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1617 to 1622.

RESIDENTIAL TENANCIES
AMENDMENT ACT (RENTAL
INSURANCE), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LA
LOCATION À USAGE D'HABITATION
(ASSURANCE DES LOYERS)

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I ask all members to please take their seats.

We'll first deal with ballot item number 40, standing in the name of Mr. Prue.

Mr. Prue has moved second reading of Bill 209. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Bisson, Gilles	Marchese, Rosario
Hampton, Howard	Prue, Michael

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Albanese, Laura	Kwinter, Monte	Savoline, Joyce
Arthurs, Wayne	Mangat, Amrit	Sergio, Mario
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	McNeely, Phil	Smith, Monique
Brown, Michael A.	Moridi, Reza	Sousa, Charles
Colle, Mike	Pendergast, Leeanna	Van Bommel, Maria
Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David
Dickson, Joe	Rinaldi, Lou	
Hoskins, Eric	Ruprecht, Tony	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 4; the nays are 25.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll open the doors for 30 seconds and then deal with the next ballot item.

WIND TURBINES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with—

Interjection.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Could you be a little bit quiet so the Clerk can count? It's pretty hard, I'm sure, and distracting for them.

We'll now deal with ballot item number 42, standing in the name of Mr. Murdoch.

Mr. Murdoch has moved private member's notice of motion 116. All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Barrett, Toby	Hardeman, Ernie	Savoline, Joyce
Dunlop, Garfield	Murdoch, Bill	

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Dickson, Joe	Rinaldi, Lou
Albanese, Laura	Hoskins, Eric	Ruprecht, Tony
Arthurs, Wayne	Jaczek, Helena	Sandals, Liz
Balkissoon, Bas	Kwinter, Monte	Sergio, Mario
Berardinetti, Lorenzo	Mangat, Amrit	Smith, Monique
Bisson, Gilles	McNeely, Phil	Sousa, Charles
Brown, Michael A.	Moridi, Reza	Van Bommel, Maria
Colle, Mike	Pendergast, Leeanna	Wilkinson, John
Dhillon, Vic	Phillips, Gerry	Zimmer, David

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 5; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day. Government House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Even though we're having so much fun, I move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the ayes have it.

This House stands adjourned until next Monday at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1627.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South-Weston / York-Sud-Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington-Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering-Scarborough East / Pickering-Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia-Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough-Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand-Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough-Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins-James Bay / Timmins-Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke-Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma-Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont-Dundas-South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham-Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton-Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga-Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax-Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale-High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward-Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor-Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby-Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉS PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldip Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Orazietti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
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Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

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Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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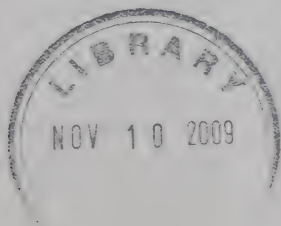
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Monday 2 November 2009

Lundi 2 novembre 2009



Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Monday 2 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lundi 2 novembre 2009

The House met at 1030.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Islamic prayer.

Prayers.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm pleased to introduce three guests. They are the relatives of page Elliott Brand, who is acting as a captain today. His father, Sebastian Brand, is here; his grandfather Peter Brand is here; his grandmother Nelly Brand is here; and also, the grandparents from the other side: Charlie Ireton, grandfather; Dorothy Ireton, grandmother; and also, aunt Mary Ireton is here. I want to welcome them to the Legislature.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'd like to welcome to the House today Mrs. Esther Webster, who is the mother of page Jessica Webster from the great riding of Whitby-Oshawa.

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to introduce Juan Vasquez, who works at Mount Sinai Hospital and is a member of SEIU.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to welcome the students and teachers from St. Robert Catholic High School in Thornhill who are seated in the Speaker's gallery this morning. Welcome to Queen's Park.

STANDING ORDERS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On Tuesday, October 27, the member for Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Runciman, raised a point of order respecting an announcement made outside this House by the Premier. In doing so, the member brought to the House an issue that has arisen all too frequently over the years, that being the tendency of governments of the day to make announcements of significant public policy outside the Legislative Assembly.

The government House leader, Ms. Smith, responded to the point of order by saying that she was unclear about the announcement being referred to. I would say to the government House leader that I am not sure this should realistically have been the subject of confusion, given the scope and prominence of the Premier's announcement earlier that day.

In any event, the member for Leeds-Grenville rose again the next day to further clarify his point of order, making it clear that his specific complaint related to the

Premier's announcement on October 26, respecting further significant details of the government's previously announced plan to implement all-day kindergarten. I note that the Minister of Education felt these details important enough that she echoed the Premier's announcement last Thursday during ministerial statements.

The government House leader also responded, rather unconstructively, that there was a time when a previous government presented an entire budget off-site. The minister would do well to remind herself of the response to that event by the Speaker of the day.

As I intimated at the outset, nothing about this point of order is new. It is but the latest in a long litany of similar points of order raised over the years by members sincerely frustrated by the ongoing tendency of governments to make announcements outside of the Legislative Assembly in advance of, or instead of, informing the House.

I and my predecessors have repeatedly conveyed our deep concern about how these types of extra-parliamentary announcements erode the stature of Parliament. Speakers have repeatedly implored governments to consider the impact of this erosion and how it damages the reputation of the foundation institution of this province. These pleas go repeatedly unheard and unheeded.

The point of order raised by the member for Leeds-Grenville has merit. In an ideal world where the legitimate and historic role of the Legislative Assembly, and specifically of the loyal opposition, were given first consideration, I expect that what a previous Speaker referred to as these types of "administrative discourtesies" would not arise.

However, Speakers have consistently conceded that they possess no authority to compel ministers to first make their announcement in the Legislative Assembly. I am in no different position today than my predecessors. Earlier, I suggested the government House leader should consider the then Speaker's 2003 response to the so-called Magna budget. I might also suggest the member for Leeds-Grenville likewise consider the response of the House to the Speaker's finding of a *prima facie* case of contempt of the Legislature. Quite simply, the House did not agree. The House or, more precisely, a majority of the members, defeated a motion that was eloquent in its simplicity—being the proposition that the House ought to be the first in line to receive an announcement as significant as the budget. What could be more relevant to the member's point of order? But the precedent set by the House disagreeing with this certainly leaves the Speaker with little authority, beyond moral suasion, to require anything different.

Though in no position to do anything about it, like my predecessors, I am sympathetic to the grievance these types of activities raise. Nothing about this is new, and similar complaints have risen from all three parties in this House over the years as their roles have changed from government to opposition. The Speaker can only suggest that it falls to the players to heal this syndrome of casual diminishments of the legitimate and key role of the opposition and of this House. In reality, only the government of the day is in a position to lead change on this.

I believe that a strong opposition makes for a strong government. Holding the executive to account is central to our system of government, but this cannot fully take place when the ability to respond to and criticize announcements of government policy is not available because the announcement did not occur during statements by the ministry and responses. Once again, I ask those in positions of influence to seriously consider the legitimate and rightful role of the opposition parties in our parliamentary system.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): In a similar vein, on Wednesday, October 28, the member for Oshawa, Mr. Ouellette, raised a point of order respecting the content of an answer by the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities to a question in oral questions. The member from Oshawa alleged, as he has on past occasions, that the question-and-answer sequence amounted to a set-up for an announcement of government policy without the opposition parties being afforded the right to reply to such an announcement, as would be the case during statements by the ministry and responses. I took the point of order under advisement, and having reviewed the Hansard of the exchange in question, I am now ready to rule.

In receiving this matter, I also looked at previous rulings and found that one I made on December 13, 2007, is particularly on point. On that point of order, also raised by the member for Oshawa, I ruled that while the Speaker is not in a position to make judgment on answers in order to ascertain whether the contents constitute announcements of new public policy, I'm nevertheless in agreement with the member that such announcements should be made during ministerial statements and not during question period.

I can say that regarding last Wednesday's question period, the matter is a little more definite. In replying both to the main question and the supplementary, the Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities quite specifically used the opportunities to make announcements regarding his ministry's response to certain problems with a private career college.

The member for Oshawa has a valid point of order and was correct that this is an improper use of question period. There's ample precedent upholding a prohibition against using question period to make announcements of government policy. The proper proceeding for this to occur is during statements by ministries and responses.

1040

ORAL QUESTIONS

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: A question to the Minister of Health—and first let me say, on behalf of the PC Party, we thank the nurses, doctors and health professionals for their dedication and hard work under extraordinary pressure in administering the H1N1 flu vaccine. I know my colleague the minister feels the same way. And thank you to families, who are enduring very long wait times, for their patience and perseverance.

Minister, if I could, by way of update, how many people in Ontario have received the H1N1 flu vaccine to date?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to echo what the Leader of the Opposition has said. There are many, many people across this province who are working very, very hard under very challenging circumstances to get as many people immunized as quickly as possible.

We have, to date, received 2.2 million doses of the vaccine. At this point, I cannot tell you how many people have actually been vaccinated, but what I can tell you is that our goal is that, by the end of this week, we will have administered the full 2.1 million doses.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: With due respect to the minister, I think it is a very fair expectation that Ontario families would know and MPPs would know how many vaccines have been distributed to date. We understand that 2.2 million have been sent to the province of Ontario, but how many pregnant women, how many children, how many vulnerable people have actually received that inoculation to date?

Last Thursday, my deputy leader and health critic, Christine Elliott, called on the government to keep clinics open 24 hours a day, seven days a week. H1N1 does not work 9-to-5 hours and neither should we.

I ask the minister again: How many people have actually been inoculated, and what's your goal for this week in inoculations for vulnerable people?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me be very, very clear: We have distributed 2.1 million doses of the vaccine to public health units, to doctors' offices, to family health teams, to community health centres, so we are determined to get the vaccine into people as quickly as we possibly can. This is a very challenging process.

As I said earlier, our goal is, by the end of this week, to have the 2.1 million doses that we have in hand in the arms of those high-priority groups.

We heard last week that the supply that we will be receiving from the federal government this week is significantly lower than we had expected, so we are devising the strategy to move forward from that point.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: I would expect, quite frankly, that at the end of each and every day, the minister would have an update on how many pregnant women, children and vulnerable Ontario residents have had their shot. We understand you have 2.2 million shots, but how many are actually getting into arms in the province of Ontario?

We've brought forward a number of suggestions to make sure the supply we have gets to people when they need it instead of these sad, sorry sights of pregnant women and children waiting out in the rain for hours and hours and then finding, when they get to the door, that the clinic has closed.

I ask the minister again, for that supply that she says she has distributed: Why don't you open those clinics 24 hours a day and bring in retired nurses and doctors to help make sure more vulnerable Ontarians get those shots immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that everyone in this House is committed to the idea that we get the vaccine out and into the arms of Ontarians as quickly as possible. That is why we are actually doubling the number of clinics across the province. We are extending the hours of clinics. Every public health unit has a strategy to get the vaccines into the arms of people as quickly as possible. It is a big job.

We will be getting the report, but I can tell you right now that my priority is to get the shots in the arms, not to do the paperwork and the administrative work that the member opposite is recommending.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Health: One would expect that you would know, as the Minister of Health, how many vaccines have actually gone into the arms of vulnerable Ontarians—pregnant women and children. I worry, Minister, that this process has gone dangerously off the rails. We need you and the Premier to step up to the plate and show leadership so we don't have those long lines of pregnant women and children waiting for hours in the rain.

Minister, I want to call your attention as well to a very disturbing headline in the Kingston Whig-Standard. It says, "Flu Clinic Going Ahead for Inmates, But No Plan in Place for Guards." Minister, why are inmates being inoculated while pregnant women and children have to wait?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I will be very clear about this: No one was happy to see what we all saw on the news last week, which was lineups of people standing in the rain. That is why we are moving to double the number of clinics in the city of Toronto; they have 10 clinics open today. As I said, we're really focusing on our family doctors to get the vaccines out to those who are in those highest priority groups.

I am going to ask the people across the province to respect the priority groups. There are some people in this

province who are at much higher risk of complications due to H1N1. We are determined to focus on those priority groups, and in the supplementary, I will review what those priority groups are.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: Again, with due respect to the minister, I hardly think that Ontario prisoners should be a priority group in the province of Ontario when pregnant women and children are lining up for hours and hours on end. To see a young father arrive at 4 a.m. to save a spot for his pregnant wife and kid, that's wrong. That's wrong in Ontario in 2009. I cannot believe this government would contemplate inoculating prisoners with the H1N1 vaccine while pregnant women and children are waiting in line.

Minister, why is it you're putting clinics into prisons instead of workplaces and schools where they could help vulnerable people in the province of Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The groups that we are focused on this week are the priority groups, and I do urge you to listen carefully. Our health care workers—we need our health care workers healthy to respond to this; our health care workers are a priority group. Pregnant women are a priority group. Healthy children between the ages of six months and up to but not including five years of age are a priority group. Household contacts of people who can't be immunized, for example, parents of small babies under six months old, should be immunized this week; also people in remote and isolated communities and anyone under the age of 65 who has a chronic condition. There are prisoners who fall into that priority group, and they are being immunized, as well they should be.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Well, I guess we have a difference of opinion. I do not believe that prisoners in our system today should be a priority group while pregnant women and children are waiting in line for hours and hours on end. I guess—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Members will come to order.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Only in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario would prisoners be moved to the front of the line while pregnant women and children wait in the rain for hours. Nurses have not been able to get their shots. EMTs have not been able to get their shots. Doctors have not been able to get their shots. Pregnant women and children waited for hours without getting their shots.

I ask the minister once again: What planet is she on where she would prioritize inoculating prisoners while vulnerable patients, front-line workers and even the jail guards cannot get access to their shots?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think that the Leader of the Opposition should actually speak to his critic. His critic has said very clearly that we need to listen to our health care experts. We need to rely on those people to do their job.

Now, I understand that some people want to play politics with a pandemic; I am not one of those people. I am determined to get the priority groups inoculated as soon as possible, and that includes healthy people under age 65 with a chronic underlying condition.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

1050

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I want to start by saying that New Democrats want to express their appreciation to those health care providers who are stretched to the limit during this crisis as well as to all those people who are extremely frustrated and are doing their best to be patient during this time, because at vaccination clinics around the province confusion and chaos reigns.

This past weekend, parents worried about their children's health—

Interjection.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Sorry. It's to the Premier, Speaker.

This past weekend, parents worried about their children's health. They were left standing for hours in the rain. The Toronto Star wrote, "Queen's Park has no excuse for the seeming disorganization of the H1N1 vaccination program within Ontario." The government has had months and months to get ready. Why is it so unprepared?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question and the opportunity to speak to a very important issue. The Minister of Health and I have just come from a meeting with our chief medical officer of health, Dr. King. One of the things that we asked a great deal about, of course, is the improvement that we would expect to see this week based on what occurred last week. There were some tremendous successes in some parts of the province, but in others, particularly in Toronto, families were left waiting in line for simply too long a period of time.

We have now learned we're going to go from 50 clinics that were open last week to 100. Here in the city of Toronto, we'll go from two to 10. This week there will be 2,000 doctors' offices and clinics, all told, available. Our intention is to administer 2.1 million doses by this end of this week. I am confident that we have taken a major leap forward in ensuring that we have more people available on the ground delivering these vaccines at a much faster rate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Last week, Ontario's chief medical officer of health was asked whether clinics would be open to the general public this week and she said, "We will start adding other groups as supply permits ... it's going to be very vaccine-supply dependent." This is the Ontario chief medical officer of health. But the minister's staff, on the other hand, contradicted her and insisted that the clinics would be open to all Ontarians today. My question is this: Is this the kind of clear communication that was called for in the wake of SARS?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I believe that we've been very clear, and I would enlist my colleagues opposite in both opposition parties in this particular cause. We have to place a great deal of reliance on Canada's public health experts and the very best advice that we're getting from them is that it's really important that we proceed to deliver the vaccine to those who are in these high-priority groups because they are simply the most at risk of serious harm. We're going to proceed to deliver the vaccine to those people in the high-priority groups. As soon as we have completed that work, we're going to move along to the rest of the Ontario population, certainly to all those who are seeking to avail themselves of the vaccine. I think we've been very clear from the outset that our shared responsibility is to deliver the vaccine first and foremost to those who find themselves in these high-priority groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The reality is that parents across Ontario, whether they're waiting for hours at a clinic or waiting at home, just want to keep their children safe. The message should have been clear and it should have been simple. Instead, it seems to change by the day, if not the hour. The SARS expert panel understood the need for a current and transparent communications strategy. Given what we should have learned, why does this government seem to be flying by the seat of its pants?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think, in fairness, all provincial public health administrations find themselves somewhat beholden, obviously, to our supplier, which is obtained through the federal government. We just learned at the end of last week—and I know that the Minister of Health contacted my honourable colleague in the NDP as well as my honourable colleague in the Conservative Party to bring them up to date in terms of the dramatic reduction we were informed we would receive by way of supply of vaccine. We've got to make adjustments accordingly.

But what we have asked Dr. King to do is to proceed as quickly as she possibly can to get those vaccines out of our fridges and into the arms of Ontarians. I have assured her that if there's anything she requires in addition, either in terms of finances or additional support of any kind, our government stands four-square behind her and will do whatever is needed to ensure that we deliver this vaccine at the earliest possible opportunity to as many Ontarians as possible.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is back to the Premier. While most families waited in the rain for hours, hoping to vaccinate their children, in Dalton McGuinty's Ontario a privileged few got to buy their way to the front of the line. How did a private, for-profit health clinic access vaccine for its elite members while families were forced to wait?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I know that the Minister of Health has indicated that this is a matter that we will

make the subject of a review. But I can say that Toronto Public Health, this time around, in the face of this particular flu, as it has in previous flu seasons, has enlisted the support of Medcan. Toronto Public Health has made that decision in the past; they've made it once again. We don't intend to insinuate ourselves into that right now, because Medcan has undertaken to deliver this vaccine to anybody in a priority group who shows up, whether they are a member of that organization or not. On that understanding, I think the appropriate thing to do is to enable them to continue to deliver that vaccine. But as the Minister of Health has said, we will undertake to review this at the appropriate time.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Medcan is one of several private clinics that offer medical care at a hefty fee. In this case, people who could afford to pay \$2,300 for a Medcan membership could get vaccinated on Friday, while those who can't afford it were being turned away at public clinics. Today we phoned the exclusive Cleveland Clinic, and they said that they are hoping to be offering the vaccines by the end of the week.

How many other private clinics are offering people a chance to buy their way to the front of the line?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, I think the appropriate thing for us to do in the circumstances is not to second-guess the decision made by Toronto Public Health. What we will do is undertake to conduct a review later.

What we have received—in fact, what Dr. McKeown at Toronto Public Health has received—is an assurance that this vaccine will now be made available to all people in priority groups.

I'm not really sure what my honourable colleague is trying to get at, at this point in time. Again, we will conduct a review. But for now the plan is to enlist as many people as we possibly can—experts on the front lines of health care—to deliver to our priority groups as quickly as we can. Medcan happens to be one of those groups at this time. Having said that, we will review this policy going forward.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I think the appropriate thing at this time is for the government of Ontario to tell Ontarians that they're committed to a universal public health care system in this province. That's what is appropriate. Instead, worried parents are told that they need to vaccinate their kids, and when they try to do that, they find that they have to wait for hours and even days. Now they learn that some people who have the money at their disposal can buy their way through the process. Is that what \$42 billion in health care buys Ontarians: access for the rich and long lines for everyone else?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think what my colleague is suggesting is that anybody in a priority group who is going to show up at Medcan should be turned away.

I think we should take advantage of as many pathways as we can get our hands on when it comes to delivering

the vaccine to as many as we can, as quickly as we can. That's what is happening right now in the province of Ontario. That's why we're going from 50 to 100 clinics. Here within the city of Toronto, we're going from two to 10. We're going to avail ourselves now of 2,000 delivery sites—doctors' offices, clinics and hospitals—and 2.1 million vaccines will be delivered and administered by the end of this week.

There are a total of 3.4 million in the priority group. We want to get our hands on as much of the vaccine as we can, through the federal government, as quickly as we can. We're going to do everything that we can, working with all of our public health officials in the most co-operative way possible, to get vaccine into the arms of as many Ontarians as we can, as quickly as possible.

1100

EMERGENCY SERVICES

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. There are 163 emergency rooms in Ontario. According to a CTV report on October 28, ER visits have already begun to increase. Patients worried about the flu are crowding children's hospitals. Patient volumes have doubled at Sick Kids and at Ottawa's Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. Minister, will you issue a call to all trained medical personnel, including available general practitioners, to assist ER triage nurses in dealing with the surge that is expected?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Certainly the anxiety of parents in particular, but also of people in general, about H1N1 is very high, and I understand that. I'm a mom, I'm a grandma, and I understand that parents care about what's happening to their kids.

There are many things that parents can do if they are concerned. We are urging people to go to our website, ontario.ca/flu. We have put a special self-assessment test on that website that will help alleviate some of the pressures on our emergency rooms. We are starting to see that people are using that tool, and they are receiving advice about whether they should seek further attention or what they should do. We also have really ramped up our resources at Telehealth. So we're doing what we can to take the pressure off the emergency rooms. I will continue in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Existing triage tools are clearly not adequate. Telehealth has already buckled under the significant pressure placed on it by taking up to 13,000 calls a day, and frankly, going to a website, if you have a child with an existing high fever, is not going to work. You need to make sure that your child can be seen, and you can't leave it to chance and a website tool.

Minister, why haven't you identified enough volunteers to assist triage nurses, administration staff, ambulatory staff and intake support to ensure that the families who come and need help can get it immediately?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Certainly the demand on our hospitals is something that we took a lot of care of in

preparation for this pandemic that—you're right—we knew was coming. That's why we have the resources in the hospitals. We have more ventilators.

We're actually finding that the demand on our emergency rooms is no greater than what we would expect in a normal flu season. We are dealing with it. The hospitals, the LHINs are working very hard, and we're there to make sure that the hospitals have the resources they need.

HOSPITAL SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Juan Vasquez was in the gallery two weeks ago when I asked the Premier about cuts at Mount Sinai Hospital's housekeeping services. Juan is a front-line worker in housekeeping at that hospital. He was sounding the alarm that his hospital was failing in the fight against infections and was not prepared for H1N1 after cutting 14 housekeeping staff. Lo and behold, less than two weeks later, Juan is back in the gallery after Mount Sinai was the first hospital to report an H1N1 outbreak.

My question is simple: Minister, can you reassure Juan that hospitals are prepared for H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: When it comes to infection control in hospitals, this is clearly an issue that has been a very high priority for our government. In fact, we now publicly post on our website infection rates for a number of different infections in each hospital so that the focus really is on bringing down those infection rates to zero, frankly. People can look on the website to see what the infection rates are. We are actually seeing tremendous progress when it comes to reducing those infection rates, and we're going to continue to do what needs to be done to keep our hospitals safe.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I think that hospital administrators are going to fall off their chairs when they hear the minister say "Zero hospital-acquired infections," but I'll let them recover.

Last September, the Auditor General produced a report on hospital-acquired infections, detailing serious concerns with hospital housekeeping and cleanliness. Today, 61 of our 159 hospitals are in deficit and looking at cuts. Unfortunately, the first thing they look at, as with Mount Sinai, is housekeeping, the very people who you say in your H1N1 pamphlet keep commonly touched surfaces clean and disinfected. It's in the pamphlet, and it's what those people do.

Minister, the Auditor General reported that hospital cleanliness was a serious problem. My question is, why is this not a priority of this government?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would just completely reject the notion that it is not a priority of the government. Clearly, it's something that we are now posting on our website, hospital by hospital, the number of different infections. It's not just we who are interested but the public as well. People have a reasonable expectation that

when they go into a hospital, it is clean. It is a legitimate expectation. We're working as hard as we can to meet that expectation. Our goal is to get to zero. If the member opposite misunderstood that we're at zero, I apologize. We are working toward that.

I can tell you that hand hygiene is one of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Now all Ontario hospitals are required to report on that hand hygiene program. We're taking a leadership role. There's more to do, and we're committed to doing it.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. With the opening of the first H1N1 clinics last week, we all heard about the long lineups, people being turned away and the limited hours. I've heard from constituents that they're willing to wait a reasonable time, but they need some assurance that they will receive the vaccination when they do line up. They've also told me they want the clinics to be open longer so that they're more accessible to people who may not be able to make it during the workday. I was also disappointed to learn that Ontario will be receiving less vaccine than expected this week.

I'd like to know what the minister can tell us about the steps the government is taking to improve the delivery of the vaccine and how it will cope with the significantly smaller delivery this week.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by thanking Ontarians for their patience through the very difficult week that we had last week. We're working very hard to get the vaccine out across the province. It has been difficult and challenging work, and a lot of very fine people have worked very hard.

I've instructed Ontario's chief medical officer of health to use whatever resources are needed to ensure that everyone who wants to be vaccinated will get a shot as quickly as possible. That's why we're doubling the number of clinics offering the vaccine, we are extending the hours, and many doctors are now offering the vaccine in their offices. I would urge people to check with their family doctor to find out whether or not they can receive the vaccine in their office rather than standing at a public clinic.

I've also asked the medical officers of health to learn from each other, to speed up those lines and to let people know if they can expect a vaccine that day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: While there are clinics being hosted by public health and regional clinics, many Ontarians prefer to get their H1N1 shot through their primary care provider, their family physician, as you mentioned earlier. I've heard conflicting reports about whether family physicians will be administering H1N1 vaccines. Over the weekend, I heard about doctors' offices and some clinics ramping up their offer of vaccines to their patients, but I've also heard that some doctors feel that

the requirements for administering the vaccines may be preventing them from offering it.

Our primary care providers are the cornerstone of our system. They deal with patients day in and day out in our communities. It's essential that they're part of our vaccination program. Can the minister please explain how doctors will be involved in any steps our government is taking to make it easier for them to offer the vaccines?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We agree that doctors are an important part of the rollout of the vaccine. That's why we're offering the vaccine through public health clinics, community health centres and doctors' offices.

We heard from the physicians that we need to make it easier for the doctors to be involved, and that's why last week I signed an order to ensure that patients can get access to their doctor through a phone consultation. We've also reduced the paperwork burden on the physicians, and we've reduced the volume requirements so that more doctors can offer the vaccine.

I'm happy to report that there will be over 2,000 locations in community settings offering the flu shot, including doctors' offices and community health centres. In Toronto alone, 100,000 vaccines have been sent to hundreds of doctors. Doctors are a critical part of our plan to get the vaccine out. We'll continue to work with them to get this job done.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Premier. A headline in a Toronto Star editorial this past weekend was "Liberal MPPs Cover Up." Even the Toronto Star's editors are questioning how the Premier could say he will take responsibility for the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle then use the Liberals' majority on public accounts to vote down calling Alan Hudson and Sarah Kramer.

Why won't the McGuinty Liberals stop using every dirty trick in the book and start taking responsibility by telling the whole story of who got rich and what rules were broken in the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

1110

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I think our responsibility—all of us—is to give expression to the public interest. The question, of course, is, what does the eHealth matter demand when it comes to giving expression to the public health interest? I think what it demanded was that we bring in the Provincial Auditor—we did that. The auditor did a great job. He came up with some specific recommendations, and he was nothing short of his usual thoroughness. We accept all of his findings. We will adopt every single one of his recommendations.

I think that's what Ontarians want us to do: They want us to move forward as quickly as we can and put in place an electronic health record for all Ontario families and all patients. That's what we're devoted to doing.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The Premier must have been kidding on Saturday when he told a roomful of Liberal

delegates that no one is shying away from talking about this eHealth scandal. The McGuinty Liberals have blocked a public inquiry, blocked the public agencies from calling Hudson and Kramer this summer, and have now blocked public accounts from hearing them. The Premier must be living in a bubble. Will he stop shying away from the eHealth scandal and call a public inquiry finally?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What my honourable colleague and her party are having—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Premier?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague and her party are having difficulty accepting the findings of the Provincial Auditor. Again, they don't like to hear this, but it's important to repeat it because they have yet to accept it. The auditor said, "We were aware of the allegations that 'party politics' may have entered into the awarding of contracts and that those awarding the contracts may have obtained a personal benefit from the firms getting the work—but we saw no evidence of this during our work." He went on to say, "We saw no evidence of fraud or criminal activity here."

Notwithstanding those very specific, explicit and incontrovertible findings—my colleagues opposite, of course, prefer to indulge in political gamesmanship—we choose instead to move ahead with electronic health records for Ontarians. That's where we'll remain focused in terms of our effort.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: My question is to the Minister of Labour. We're hearing concerns from workers across the province that some employers are penalizing them for taking time off either to get the flu shot or to stay home and recuperate from the flu.

Given the H1N1 pandemic, why hasn't the Minister of Labour instructed employers to loosen their rules so that employees can get the flu shot or stay home when they're sick without financial penalty?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question. Across Ontario, we would hope that employers do recognize the need to get the flu shot and to provide that ability to their employees. Also, employees are covered under the Employment Standards Act across Ontario. If there are any concerns around employment standards, around their protections, they can always call the Ministry of Labour. Our employment standards officers are there to investigate any of these concerns that those employees would provide to the Ministry of Labour.

But again, we ask that employers understand that families, those that are at most risk—as we've heard the Minister of Health speak to those that are at most risk—should get out and get the shot. That's why we're encouraging employers to help with that process.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: What we're asking for is a simple directive from the Ministry of Labour, and what we're

hearing is that we're getting nothing. Staying away from work when you're sick or taking time to get the flu shot should be a public health priority, but some workers are being forced—and this is a fact—to report to work even when they're sick. Why won't the Minister of Labour take action to stop employers from punishing workers for trying to do the right thing and staying healthy?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I believe that all employers across Ontario understand how important it is, especially for those that are in the high-priority groups, the high-risk groups, to get the H1N1 shot. We are working with employers, with employees, with all Ontario workers and all Ontarians to encourage those who are at high risk to get out and get the shot. This government also, through our Employment Standards Act, has brought in many protections for employees: the ability for employees to take leave while protected for emergency purposes.

We will continue to work with all our hard-working Ontarians so that they know that they are protected and that their health also is being taken care of.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Vic Dhillon: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Daily, my office is receiving requests for more information on the Serco/United Steelworkers labour dispute. Not only is this affecting those who wish to test for their first licence, but it is also affecting a number of other individuals and groups.

I understand that the Minister of Transportation has taken what steps he can to reduce the impact on Ontarians. Many of my constituents appreciate the regulation extending the licences of those who require retesting. However, there are two particular groups in my riding who are especially concerned about the validity of their driving privileges: Snowbirds and long-haul truckers, who often must take deliveries and pickups from the United States, are nervous that their licences will expire while they are on vacation or working in the US.

Now that the winter is upon us, Ontario's snowbirds are about to make the trek south. I'm hoping that the Minister of Transportation can share with this House what specific steps will have been taken to help—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I've received inquiries of this kind from the member for Brampton West, the member for Leeds–Grenville, the critic for the opposition and many members of the House. We recognize the strike as an extreme inconvenience for the people of the province. That is why we put in place a temporary regulation to ensure drivers who require a test to renew their licence can continue driving.

I want to assure the House that the licences of both snowbirds and commercial drivers who require a test to renew an Ontario's driver's licence and who will be travelling outside of Ontario will remain valid for the duration of the strike. To make it easier for those travelling outside of Ontario, we've now updated our website to

include a printable letter from the registrar confirming the validity of their licences, with the appropriate contact information for police officers to check. Their licences will continue to be valid until July 1, 2010, based on feedback from the snowbirds' association, in order to allow the drivers to return to Ontario—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Vic Dhillon: Thank you, Minister. That's very useful information that I'll be sharing with my constituents immediately.

I'd also like to share with this House some of the other concerns I've heard. Another group that I hear from regularly about the Serco/United Steelworkers labour disruption is those who work at or run the driving schools. Because there are not any drive tests taking place, there is less of a need for driver training, which in turn means that there is less of a need for driving instructors and driving schools. This strike has had a negative impact on the driving school industry. With business down, job losses are inevitable and my constituents are asking me if there's anything we can do to help. I'm asking if the Minister of Transportation can please update the House on where Serco and the United Steelworkers are in their negotiations.

Hon. James J. Bradley: Well, before I do that I want to tell the member that we're also continuing to remind other Canadian and US jurisdictions of the strike and that Ontario's driver's licences have been extended with an original notice to Canadian and US authorities on August 24. A second notice was sent to remind these authorities of the extension of driver's licences on October 23.

There's no question that this strike affects many people. I understand that both parties are working with a mediator from the Ministry of Labour to reach an agreement. I'm hopeful Serco and the United Steelworkers will reach a settlement suitable to both parties and that service will resume shortly.

As the member from Brampton West knows, there is an established collective bargaining relationship between the parties in place. The government does respect that relationship. I can say that for more information and regular updates, we encourage the public to visit the DriveTest website and the MTO website. We're working hard to resolve this, along with the Minister of Labour, in the province of Ontario. We urge the two sides to get together—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

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TOXICS REDUCTION

Mr. Toby Barrett: A question to the Minister of the Environment: You have just passed the Toxics Reduction Act, and today marks the end of public input into the list of substances your ministry considers toxic, substances you will require industry and business to not only report but also reduce. Can you explain to this House why on

earth you're forcing the food and the feed industry to report as toxic products things like Ontario-grown wheat, soybeans, as well as malted barley, chocolate, sugar and other baking ingredients? These products aren't toxic. Why would you do this, Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: First of all, we are intent on taking all toxic materials, as much as possible, out of our environment. We want to become the leading jurisdiction so that the toxic materials do not contaminate our lands or our water supply. I would be more than pleased to meet with the member on these particular issues that he's talking about. I'm not familiar with the exact details as to why those particular materials would be excluded, but I'm quite sure that there's more to it than this member leads us to believe.

We believe that the toxic reduction law that we put forward, and the regulations that come under it, will be the best in Canada and will be the best from a health viewpoint as far as the people of Ontario are concerned. We think that it's the right way to go, and I'd be more than pleased to meet with the member on this particular issue that he mentions.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Toby Barrett: Minister, this is not the first time this has been raised in the House, and you didn't even consider what impact this kind of stigmatization would have on jobs in the food industry and the feed industry and, by extension, agriculture. What do they tell consumers who learn that the products containing common food-based ingredients are, in the eyes of this government, stigmatized as toxic? This will be a public relations nightmare for the industry.

Minister, you've got a note now. Will you admit you've made a mistake? Will you exempt the feed and food production companies from reporting as toxic the most basic of food ingredients? They aren't toxic.

Hon. John Gerretsen: It's my understanding—and the list is extensive because we want to get toxic materials out of our environment; that's for everyone's benefit—that there are no food ingredients on the list. So I don't know exactly what this member is talking about.

I would much rather have a situation where he supports the concept and the notion and a law that will really make Ontario a leader in removing toxics from our environment. That's what this is all about, and we are not including any food ingredients on the draft list.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. A provincially appointed supervisor is cutting staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital in an attempt to balance the hospital's budget. Over time it is being reduced. Early retirement is being encouraged and empty positions are being left unfilled. With Ontario hospitals bursting at the seams due to the H1N1 outbreak, is now really the time to cut staff at Cambridge Memorial Hospital?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me say that our goal is to ensure that the people of Cambridge and, in fact, the whole province continue to receive high-quality health care and to ensure the long-term financial stability of the hospital.

I want to personally assure them that the quality and access of their health care will not be affected. I can tell you that our investments at Cambridge Memorial Hospital have been significant. They've had a more than \$11-million increase in their base funding since 2003-04—that's a 16% increase. In addition, they have received more than \$14 million to reduce wait times. That's over 6,000 more surgeries at Cambridge Memorial Hospital.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Cambridge Memorial Hospital is in a very difficult position. It's being forced to cut \$5 million from its budget. But Cambridge is not alone, unfortunately. Four out of every 10 Ontario hospitals are in the very same dire situation: forced to cut staff and services to balance their budgets.

How are these hospitals supposed to provide the care Ontarians need when this government is forcing them to gut their budgets by a further \$200 million next year?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I think it's important to think that 60% of the hospitals have in fact balanced their budgets. The others are working hard to do that.

We have increased hospital funding significantly—\$11 billion more going into hospitals than when we took office. That's a 42% increase. That is not a sustainable increase. It is very important that hospitals make the decisions they must make to live within their budgets. We will continue to invest more in hospitals, but we do expect hospitals to live within their budgets.

FINANCIAL LITERACY

Mr. Charles Sousa: My question is to the Minister of Education. On October 22, the Minister of Finance's fall economic statement outlined the challenges Ontario is facing due to the global economic recession. My constituents of Mississauga South are concerned about the situation and the impact it may have on their families.

Parents I talk to realize more than ever the importance of teaching children how to be smart about finances. Many are teaching their children the importance of managing personal finances, and some businesses have also created education programs for the benefit of our students, but I suggest that it would benefit the almost one million students in our province's publicly funded education system if they also learned these critical thinking and decision-making skills through our elementary and secondary schools.

Minister, can you tell this House what this government is doing to prepare our young people to take on and understand the complexities of the 21st-century global economy?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: I thank the member for Mississauga South for his question and for raising this issue.

We've built a number of opportunities into several areas of our curriculum to help foster an understanding of financial and economic literacy. Starting in grade 1, students learn about coins and money. They're expected to know things like how to identify and know the amounts of different coins, and subtract and add amounts. By grade 8, they are working on more complex problems, calculating the cost of certain items. In high school, there are a lot of courses that explicitly support the development of money management and financial literacy skills, looking at compound interest, studying budgets and simple interest, annuities, mortgages, earnings, paying taxes, purchasing and saving, investing and borrowing, and making personal financial decisions.

It's not just in mathematics courses that students learn about financial literacy. In grade 9 or grade 10, in the individual and family living course, for example, students are expected to demonstrate an understanding of how to make sound decisions and how to make those judgments in a family context.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Charles Sousa: I'm glad to hear that the curriculum incorporates some financial literacy components. However, I dare say that not enough is being done to teach kids about financial basics. There's a definite need for greater financial literacy education.

Both the federal government and the government of Manitoba have taken steps towards this goal. Last June, the federal government announced a task force on financial literacy. Manitoba has also been working on this since 2007.

On September 23, I introduced a motion in this House calling for your ministry to help ensure our students are prepared for the global economy by taking steps to include financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum. The motion has since received unanimous support in the House, and I thank all members for their support. Will the minister commit to responding to the motion of this House and integrate a more comprehensive study of financial literacy in our elementary and secondary school curriculum?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: The member, I think, has reminded us all why, in these challenging economic times particularly, a strong and relevant publicly funded education system is important as a cornerstone of economic achievement.

I'm pleased to tell him and the members of the House that we already have a partnership with the Investor Education Fund to promote financial literacy in our elementary and secondary schools. Based on that partnership, we'll convene a working group, chaired by my parliamentary assistant, the member for Kitchener-Conestoga, in order to get the best possible advice on financial literacy. This partnership stems from the ongoing work of organizations like the Investor Education Fund and will be supported with funding from the Ontario Securities Commission under the umbrella of the Ministry of Finance. The Ontario Securities Commission is using money from

business fines to help our schools promote financial literacy.

I agree with the member from Mississauga South that preparing our students for the challenges of the 21st-century global economy is one of the most important things we can do, and thank you for raising the issue.

FIRE SAFETY

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services. You're aware of the fatalities and critical injuries that have occurred as a result of fires in retirement homes over the past 18 months: Cavendish Manor in Niagara, Rowanwood in Huntsville and Muskoka Heights in Orillia, where four seniors tragically died. All these homes were built prior to 1998.

Minister, do you support a program that would make it mandatory for retirement homes built pre-1998 to have sprinkler systems installed, and, if so, when can we expect to see legislation?

1130

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: It is a very, very important question. That's why I asked the Office of the Fire Marshal to do a comprehensive study with regard to the use of sprinklers. We will look at the results of that study and we will weigh the results of that study with the realities that we have at our disposal today and, obviously, always ensure that we do everything in our power to ensure that everyone in Ontario is as safe as possible.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: This issue has been studied to death. It's about community safety and the safety of our seniors.

Fire chiefs and fire services from across the province are outraged with the lack of leadership from you and your ministry. Surely disadvantaged seniors living in retirement homes deserve to have improved fire protection. Even your own colleague from York West put forward a private member's bill, Bill 214, An Act to amend the Fire Protection and Prevention Act, 1997, with respect to sprinkler retrofittings.

Minister, I ask you again, will you support our fire chiefs, our fire services, your own colleagues and our seniors and support a program to install mandatory sprinklers in retirement homes immediately?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I do take exception to some parts of the member's question, obviously. There is nobody outraged in the fire service in the province of Ontario. Everybody is quite happy that this government invested \$30 million, an unprecedented investment never done by the Tories when they were the government, and certainly slashed by the NDP when they were the government.

We amended the Ontario building code to require sprinklers in all newly constructed residential buildings higher than three storeys. We amended the Ontario fire code to require working smoke alarms on every storey of a home. I have to tell you, we are listening to our partners

in community safety and we will continue to listen to our partners in community safety, because we understand it is a partnership, not a dictatorship.

TERMINATION AND SEVERANCE PAYMENTS

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. The minister will know that over the last couple of years, almost 2,000 forest sector workers across northwestern Ontario have been laid off by the Buchanan Group of Companies. Under the laws of Ontario, those workers are entitled to severance pay and termination pay. But under the McGuinty government, virtually none of those workers have received the severance pay and termination pay that they are entitled to under the laws of Ontario.

My question is this: You are the minister responsible for the forest sector. Has the McGuinty government done anything, anything at all, to ensure that these workers receive the severance pay and termination pay they're entitled to under the laws of Ontario?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: Certainly I'm very, very conscious of the serious situation that's being faced in terms of the challenges that are happening up at Terrace Bay Pulp in particular. We are working closely with the company and certainly I have been working with the many workers who are in that situation. We are going to continue to work on the basis that the best possible solution, ultimately, will be if the company is able to get their operation back up and running.

We have been working with a number of people as well who were impacted by this. It's an issue that I'm very sensitive to as Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry, but also, may I say, as the MPP for Thunder Bay—Superior North. We're going to continue to do what we can to see the best possible solution to the situation and continue to work with the workers, who are hopeful indeed that the operation will be back up and running.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Howard Hampton: There's something strange about this, because while almost 2,000 workers have been denied the severance pay and termination pay they're entitled to under Ontario's laws, the Buchanan Group of Companies has done very well under the McGuinty Liberals: more than \$30 million for road building; \$22.5 million for the Buchanan company in Terrace Bay; a further \$4.8 million to Terrace Bay Pulp; \$26 million in deferred stumpage fees; \$600,000 for Long Lake Forest Products. In all, the McGuinty government has handed out \$80 million to the Buchanan Group of Companies.

My question is this: Did anybody—did you—call the Buchanan Group of Companies and say, "Some of this money should go to the workers to ensure that they're treated fairly"?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that we are working and continue to work closely with the Buchanan Group of Companies. The member from Kenora knows

very, very well that, indeed, this is a company that was one of the largest employers—up to 4,000 people employed in northern Ontario by the Buchanan company.

Indeed, when Neenah Paper shut down their operation in Terrace Bay Pulp, our government worked with Buchanan Forest Products in order to get the Terrace Bay Pulp operation back up and running, which was an extraordinarily positive thing for the people in Terrace Bay and Schreiber, which impacted on the sawmill operations as well.

There is no doubt there are extraordinary challenges faced by the forestry sector, certainly in northern Ontario. We want to continue to work to see the best possible result, which ultimately would be to see the Terrace Bay Pulp operation back up and running, which obviously would benefit the workers. Certainly that's what we're going to continue to try to do to find a positive solution to this very difficult situation.

TOURISM

Mr. Dave Levac: My question is for the Minister of Tourism. There's no doubt that, this year, the economic downturn has had an impact on tourist operations throughout the province, and I've noticed it first-hand in the riding of Brant. In addition to the economic challenges, the tourism industry has also experienced other factors which have impacted both the province and particularly my riding. Fewer US travellers visited the province because of the economic challenges. Coupled with the fluctuating Canadian dollar and the implementation of passport requirements, it has been difficult.

Can the minister tell us in this House what the Ontario government is planning to do to help this vital industry in Ontario, and in particular the riding of Brant, due to this disaster that has happened in the tourism industry?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I want to thank the member from Brant. As he mentioned, this is a difficult year for tourism across the country and around the world and, of course, here in Ontario. Our government has recognized the significance of tourism to the economy, and we have taken every opportunity to support our tourism sector throughout the province.

I'd like to highlight just one example for the House today of a commitment that we made in the member's riding: the Brantford International Jazz Festival. It took place from September 19 to 20 and provided three stages, showcasing music such as jazz, big band swing, Afro-Cuban jazz, jazz fusion and experimental jazz, all in downtown Brantford.

I'm pleased that the McGuinty government invested \$22,500 to assist in the enhancing of this festival by booking internationally renowned performers, including one of my personal favourites, Canadian jazz singer phenomenon Holly Cole.

Supporting innovative and unique events like the Brantford International Jazz Festival helps bring cultural products to communities and ensures that visitors follow that product—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Dave Levac: The Brantford International Jazz Festival that the minister spoke about is one of the many festivals and events held in the riding of Brant each year. This event has become extremely successful in just a short time thanks to Frank and Nancy DiFelice, the central organizing committee, along with the army of volunteers—so much so that it more than doubled its attendance in 2008, and our statistics show that a very large number of those came from outside of Brant, outside of Ontario, and came actually, indeed, from the United States. It's a substantial tourism draw. It brings music lovers together from all over the province and the US, as I've said.

I have had an opportunity to attend other festivals and events, such as the International Villages Festival, the Bell City car show and the Firefighter Combat Challenge to name just a few. I can see how important these festivals are to our local economy.

Minister, can you comment specifically on how important the Brantford International Jazz Festival is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think all members in this House recognize that festivals and events in their particular ridings are great economic drivers, attract a lot of people to their communities—put heads in beds, as we say in the industry—and ensure that we have a lot of economic activity in our various communities across the province.

As I've noted in this House before, tourists spent over \$22 billion in Ontario in 2007, and tourism is directly or indirectly responsible for about 300,000 jobs.

I'm proud of the Brantford International Jazz Festival, and I, too, want to congratulate the DiFelices and all of the organizers of the festival.

This year, attendance grew at the Brantford International Jazz Festival, from 8,000 in 2008 to—as reported in the Brantford Expositor—25,000 this year. That's an increase of over 200%. That's incredibly exciting.

I want to congratulate all of the organizers and thank all of those people who are attracting more tourists to the region and working very hard—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is to the Minister of Transportation. Minister, last week in my constituency office, I had a gentleman come in; he was 65 years old and a trucker whose job requires that he drive into the United States. He went on to explain to me that he has completed the medical, he has completed the written test, but he of course can't get the road test because of your lack of a plan to resolve that issue.

Mr. Speaker, I would say to you, to the minister, and to all people, that this is an issue where people are losing

their income because there's no plan to resolve this dispute. He's now facing the chance of being laid off. Being 65 years of age, he has no other option but to continue driving, and you have no plan.

In fact, what you said today is not correct. The US jurisdictions are not recognizing the extension, and it seems to me that you have nothing to offer this man except no job because of your lack of action. What are you going to do to help Mr. Kloos solve this problem?

Hon. James J. Bradley: I know that it is made difficult by the fact that a number of years ago you signed a contract, your government did, with Serco, the Conservative government did, and it did not necessarily have in that contract the kinds of provisions which would have anticipated this eventuality. You know that the contract goes to the year 2013, your privatization of this particular system, and now we are the ones who have to deal with the situation as it is at the present time.

The Minister of Labour is doing his very best, and the two sides were together with a mediator on the weekend. We recognize that a collective agreement has to be signed; I know you wouldn't want us to favour one side or other in the middle of contract negotiations. What I indicated to the member for Brampton West today is a number of provisions we've put in place to assist those who are confronted with great difficulties as a result of this strike.

NOTICE OF DISSATISFACTION

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 38(a), the member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of his dissatisfaction with the answer to his question given by the Minister of the Environment concerning regulations for the food and feed industry under the Toxics Reduction Act. This matter will be debated tomorrow at 6 p.m.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1142 to 1300.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: The McGuinty government's unwillingness to bring an end to the strike at its DriveTest offices, which is now in its 11th week, demonstrates that this government either doesn't understand the seriousness of the strike or simply doesn't care.

Over the past weeks, I've called on the Minister of Transportation and the Minister of Labour to bring an end to this strike, which is causing increasing hardship to Ontarians, and all we've heard in response is rhetoric. We've seen no action.

In a desperate attempt to get the government's attention, the Truck Training Schools Association of Ontario

has planned a truck and bus convoy to a rally here at Queen's Park at 10 a.m. tomorrow morning. Up to 300 truck driver trainees and instructors will plead their case.

In a letter to the Premier, Gus Rahim, the president of the Truck Training Schools Association, said this, "Our programs are now virtually at a standstill, with fully trained students waiting to start on a new career path, employers desperate to fill vacancies and our own employees and staff facing massive layoffs."

The response from the Premier and this government has been a deafening silence. Hopefully, tomorrow's protest will help this government to understand the urgency of the situation and finally motivate them to act.

SIKH COMMUNITY

Mr. Bob Delaney: I rise today to join my Sikh friends to celebrate the birthdate of the founder of the Sikh religion, Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji. Guru Nanak Dev Sahib Ji is the first of 10 Sikh gurus. Sikhs believe all subsequent gurus possess Guru Nanak's divinity and religious authority. This celebration usually falls in November, though the date varies from year to year according to the lunar Indian calendar.

Celebrations often last for three days and include the recitation of religious texts in the Gurdwaras, a procession of Sikhs singing hymns, and, of course, my favourite part, the serving of vegetarian food in the Langar Hall at the Gurdwara.

The Gurdwaras are decorated with flowers, flags and lights and are attended by Sikhs who join together for the festivities and eat special food like Karah Parshad, a warm, sweet food that has been blessed.

I'll be honoured this year to celebrate Gurburab with the Ontario Khalsa Darbar, or as we more commonly know it in Mississauga, the Dixie Gurdwara. This is an important date for our Sikh friends. To those Sikhs in western Mississauga, throughout Peel region and across Ontario, I say, "Gurburab di lakh lakh vadhai hove."

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I'm proud to rise today on behalf of the leader of the official opposition, Tim Hudak, and the Progressive Conservative caucus to pay tribute to hard-working Legion comrades who are organizing Remembrance Day services and events at cenotaphs and Royal Canadian Legions across Ontario and Canada.

In my riding, a Remembrance Day parade and service in Ayr will be hosted by the Galt Legion Branch 121 on Sunday, November 8. Under the guidance of President Charlie Rose, Branch 121 will also host another parade and wreath-laying ceremony at the Galt cenotaph on Remembrance Day, November 11.

In Hespeler, President Bill Steel and comrades of Legion Branch 272 will host a Remembrance Day banquet on Saturday, November 7. A wreath-laying ceremony will also be held at the Hespeler cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

At the Preston Legion Branch 126, President Peter Gates and comrades will participate in a wreath-laying ceremony at the King Street cenotaph on Remembrance Day.

We thank all Legion comrades in Canada, Ontario and my riding of Cambridge and North Dumfries who work so hard to ensure that those who made the ultimate sacrifice on behalf of Canada are not forgotten.

THE SPEAKER

Mr. Michael Prue: Mr. Speaker, I rise today to talk about your initiative, the Speaker's initiative. I had the opportunity to attend with the Speaker this morning at East York Collegiate Institute in my riding. It was, I understand, one of 12 such events he has so far scheduled and spoken at.

To see the students actually come face to face with the Speaker, to see the questions—I think they all learned a lot; I know I certainly did. I was totally unaware that the three-cornered hat's history, its military usage and its rain-dispelling funnels were of such significance. He brought Queen's Park to that school. Where an education in political life is not always taught, to have someone of the Speaker's magnitude there was truly wonderful.

The students were interested and rapt throughout; in fact, we had to leave while there were, I'm sure, more questions, in order to get back for question period. They asked questions on crime, on the HST, on the salaries that members of the provincial Legislature get, on federal issues and even the role of the media and how the media portrays what is said and what is done around here. There were many discussions of political life, and I think more than a few of them are now interested in one day being members in this House or perhaps municipally, where they would not have been before.

Again, I commend the Speaker for his initiative. It is a truly wonderful thing, and I hope he finds the time to go throughout the province spreading this good word. I was even interested in his own East York roots.

ST. JOSEPH ISLAND PLOWMEN'S ASSOCIATION

Mr. Michael A. Brown: I wish to bring to the attention of all members a celebration of rural agriculture, especially northern agriculture. Every year, agricultural fairs in Laird, Bruce Mines, Massey, Assiginack, Wikwemikong and Providence Bay reflect the rural roots of Algoma-Manitoulin. This year one event stands out: the 75th anniversary of the St. Joseph Island Plowmen's Association.

On August 22, plowmen from around St. Joseph Island and along the north shore from as far away as Massey convened on a field outside of Richards Landing. From horse teams to antique tractors, the competitors took to the land and the plowing began after a short bit of speechifying by local officials and organizers. Then it was off to the fields. A crowd of approximately 500

people joined the competitors and volunteers to enjoy a great day in celebration of this last remaining plowing match in Algoma.

On Saturday, October 24, the awards ceremony took place. My congratulations to all the winners and the organizing committee, and in particular, my coaches Perry Coulter and Donna Schell, for an amazing day and a true celebration of what is good, right and important in our rural communities.

SPORTS HALL OF FAME

Mr. John O'Toole: I stand today in the House to pay tribute to local heroes in many of our communities who have participated in some way. Scugog township inducted members to the Sports of Hall of Fame on October 22. The inductees include George Burnett, former NHL coach and champion coach in the OHL and the American Hockey League, who is still involved in hockey today.

Joining Coach Burnett among the 2009 inductees were: Dennis Johnston, a figure-skating champion and figure-skating coach, as well as a skating coach for the NHL. He was also a bronze medalist in the Canadian nationals; Wayne Venning, who was honoured in the "Builder" category for his leadership in softball as an umpire, manager and coach. Wayne is also a keen supporter of ringette, hockey and youth sports in general; the Port Perry Juvenile 'C' hockey team from 1959-60, captained by Doug McMillan. The 1959-60 Juvenile 'C's were the first Port Perry Minor Hockey Association team to win a provincial title.

These athletes and builders are not only champions in Scugog, they are among the elite in Canadian sports. It is my privilege to recognize them. These are people who are models in our communities for an active lifestyle in today's rather sedentary society.

AMIT CHAKMA

Mr. Khalil Ramal: On October 23, I had the pleasure of attending the installation ceremony for Western University's 10th president, Dr. Amit Chakma. He is a good scholar and leader, and I am proud to have him as the president of Ontario's best university. His goal is to make the University of Western Ontario amongst the top institutions in the world.

Dr. Chakma's story is one that Ontarians can take pride in. He was born in Bangladesh and he received his education in Africa and Canada. He worked hard here in Canada and he became an example for many people as a scholar and leader. His gift is astonishing, as many of his goals were achieved in his youth, as he is on the list of the top 40 professors under 40.

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The University of Western Ontario is already known for being a world-class institution. It's in the heart of London, and it is the epicentre for engineering, medicine and biology. There are still many strides to be made, and

Dr. Chakma is the ideal leader to take Western into the future. I am confident that Dr. Chakma and his team will make the University of Western Ontario outshine universities around the world and will continue to innovate and discover to help the people of Ontario, Canada and the world by their discoveries and by their innovations to serve humanity.

THANK-A-VET LUNCHEON

Mr. Dave Levac: It's with great honour I rise today and bring to the attention of the House an annual event held in the riding of Brant for over 20 years that will take place this coming Saturday. It's called the Thank-A-Vet Luncheon.

Since 1998, in its new present format, local veterans, spouses, widows and widowers from Brant, Brantford, Six Nations and New Credit have been invited as honoured guests to enjoy a delicious hot meal, greetings from various dignitaries of all levels, and the sights and sounds of their era. It is a time for them to share stories and renew friendships and lets us all say, in a small way, thank you.

On November 7, this luncheon sees over 675 guests being honoured by their community as a small way of expressing our gratitude for their sacrifices made in past wars and, indeed, the present ones.

I had the honour of chairing the committee from 1998 to 2004. It's hard work, and we say thank you to those who make this event very successful. This year's co-chairs, Heather Gaukel and Grant Philpott, and co-vice-chairs, Tracy Vanderwyk and Liz Ferraccioli, deserve kudos for making sure this event succeeds every year. I trust this year will be no different.

With the assistance and the participation of the private sector, public sector, students and volunteers, enough funds are raised to make this event free to those we cherish—our veterans.

The Thank-A-Vet Luncheon, to our knowledge, is the largest of its kind in Canada. We say to our veterans everywhere: Thank you for your courage. Thank you for your sacrifice. We will remember.

JACOB ZORZELLA

Mr. Mike Colle: Today I rise to bring attention to a remarkable athlete from my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence. His name is Jacob Zorzella, a proud lifelong resident of Lawrence Heights.

Jacob is a world-class triple jumper who entered competitive athletics just over a year and a half ago. Though his career has just started, Jacob has won a silver medal at the Canada Games, a gold medal at the Canadian Track and Field Championships and a gold medal at the junior nationals. Jacob is now on the road to competing in the 2012 Olympics in London, England, for Canada.

He will also be competing in upcoming international matches like the World Indoor Championships in Qatar

and the Commonwealth Games in New Delhi. His hard work and dedication have made him an inspiration to the youth in our community, all across Ontario and at his old high school, the Vaughan Road Academy.

Jacob's motto is "If you can't believe you can do it, you won't." His belief in himself, joined with his determination and commitment, will ensure Jacob great success in the future. Our community believes in Jacob, and we wish him well on his path towards gold in London in 2012.

We ask all other Ontarians to get behind our young athletes so they can make it to the Olympics. I ask everybody to get behind Jacob so he can jump for gold in 2012 in London. Good luck, Jacob.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I beg leave to present a Report on Agencies, Boards and Commissions: Ontario Racing Commission from the Standing Committee on Government Agencies and move the adoption of its recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman presents the committee's report and moves the adoption of its recommendations. Does the member wish to make a brief statement?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: Yes. As Chair of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies I'm pleased to table this report, our fourth in a series of selected agencies, boards and commissions of Ontario.

In this report, the committee reviews the work of the Ontario Racing Commission and makes some recommendations for improvements. Subjects dealt with in this report include a recommended ministry review of the scope of the ORC's mandate, with attention to industry regulation and adjudication; a recommendation that all racetracks and slots programs provide live horse racing; and financial challenges facing Ontario's racetracks located close to provincial and international borders.

The committee thanks the chair and staff of the Ontario Racing Commission for their assistance in all stages of the review, and also expresses our appreciation to those people who made presentations both in person and in writing.

I also thank committee members for their contributions to the review process, and thanks as well to our researcher officer, Ray McLellan, and the clerk of the committee, Doug Arnott.

With that, I move adjournment of the debate.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Hardeman moves adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Debate adjourned.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

CONSUMER PROTECTION

Hon. Ted McMeekin: I'm pleased to rise in the House today to share some important news with my honourable colleagues. This month of November is an important one. This month, we sit on the cusp of the holiday season and the busiest retail time of the year. The people of Ontario prepare for this special time of year by buying gifts, decorating their homes and preparing for festive parties and family get-togethers. As we approach this busy time of the year, I would like to remind my colleagues just how important it is for consumers to know their rights in the marketplace.

I ask my colleagues here today to take the time this month to help us make sure that Ontario consumers are aware of their rights and know where they can turn for help and advice on consumer issues.

As Minister of Consumer Services, my job is to make sure that consumers are well served in our marketplace. They need to know that they have rights. These rights include:

- the right not to suffer the consequences of misrepresentations and other unfair practices by suppliers;

- the right to be informed with clear disclosure in consumer contracts so that people can make informed choices;

- the right to cancel a contract within a 10-day cooling-off period for goods and services such as fitness club memberships, door-to-door sales and time-share agreements;

- the right to cancel a contract if goods or services are not delivered after 30 days from the date they were promised; and

- the right to fair estimates in consumer agreements and the right to refuse to pay any cost more than 10% above the estimate given.

These rights are backed by laws and regulations that have real teeth. When and if businesses break the law, we take action. During the first six months of this year, staff at the Ministry of Consumer Services responded to over 55,000 inquiries from consumers. We investigated complaints and pursued fair resolutions of disputes. In some instances, the investigations led to charges being laid.

During the first six months of this year, the Ministry of Consumer Services got the following results for Ontario consumers: We got almost \$1.5 million in direct refunds, cancelled contracts and court-ordered resolutions; our investigations resulted in almost 2,500 charges being laid; we've obtained over \$500,000 in fines; and we've helped send 17 individuals to jail for failing to comply with our consumer protection laws in this province. Ontario consumers need to know that they are protected and, indeed, Ontario consumers enjoy some of the strongest protections in Canada.

I ask my honourable colleagues today to help me build on the confidence Ontario consumers enjoy in our

marketplace—to help your constituents become smart consumers. For my part, I'm launching a month of events today to help raise awareness among Ontario consumers of their rights and to help educate consumers about where they can turn to for help.

The Ministry of Consumer Services website is ontario.ca/mcs, and it has a tremendous amount of valuable information available for consumers. It contains a range of information to help consumers make informed choices and is very easy to navigate.

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I ask my honourable colleagues to please let their constituents know about this website if they need information about making an important purchase such as buying a gift card, buying a fitness membership or buying a service from a door-to-door salesperson. I am certain that your constituents, honourable colleagues, will be grateful for this information.

I would also like to share with members of the House that later this month my ministry will release the 2010 edition of our "smart consumer" calendar. This is a very popular calendar and it's filled with important consumer facts, tips, and links to other resources. It is also available in seven languages. Last year, we distributed 319,000 copies of the calendar, and thousands more were downloaded from our website.

During the last week of our month-long series of consumer awareness activities this month, I will be meeting with seniors and recent immigrants to help make sure the information is reaching those who are amongst our most vulnerable.

Encouraging people to become smart consumers is good for everyone. It is good for individuals and families because it can save them money and frustration and even the need to pursue legal action in many cases. When consumers know their rights and responsibilities, when consumers know they are protected under law, and when they are assured of a certain level of quality, backed up by laws and regulations, they have the confidence to spend. When consumers spend, businesses flourish and create jobs. This is good for all of us and especially important for our economy.

The best consumer protection comes through education. I challenge my colleagues today to help people across Ontario become educated and smart consumers.

Finally, I want to leave my honourable colleagues with this one last message: We're the Ministry of Consumer Services and we're here to help.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to have the opportunity to respond to the Minister of Consumer Services. I want to begin by saying that I'm very glad that the ministry has both a website and a calendar. I've had occasion to have some of these calendars and have been able to provide them to some of my constituents. But I am also concerned about some of the things that my constituents tell me that are of a consumer nature and that the minister has neglected to mention.

The first one that comes to my mind is the increasing use of illegal tobacco products. There are many people in my riding who are very concerned from a number of perspectives.

First of all, of course, is the plight of those convenience store owners trying to sell legal cigarettes, to make a legal living, and who find themselves in the position of seeing those who provide illegal tobacco, frankly, openly on the sidewalk outside their stores.

I think the Minister of Consumer Services would do Ontarians a great favour if he were to be a little more vocal on this topic, because consumers do not know why there are those significant dangers in buying illegal tobacco. What they do know is that they are getting it at a significantly lower price, and for some, that's being a smart consumer. But a study done earlier this year, the butt study, took the cigarette butts across Ontario from outside schools, which of course, by the way, are part of the Minister of Health Promotion's portfolio in discouraging people from smoking. In some school areas, at least 50% of the cigarette butts came from illegal tobacco.

Now, you might wonder, as I did initially, how anyone would be able to take a cigarette butt and determine whether it came from legal or illegal sources, since obviously it doesn't have the package with it for us to know. The answer is very simple: There are a great many non-tobacco products in illegal tobacco. This could be things that we would, in the most discreet way, refer to as garbage. You can also find mouse droppings and things like that in illegal tobacco. There's a whole range of foreign materials. So I think that as the consumer services minister, it would behoove him to take on a higher profile in the area of illegal tobacco and the kinds of dangers it represents to the consumer in Ontario.

In the moment that remains, I'd suggest that he might also want to consider how he's going to brace consumers for the increase of 8% on goods and services, come July 1. People are only now beginning to understand what this means in relation to perhaps their business and perhaps their household. The reality is that on July 1, 2010—that is, only a few short months away—they're going to see an 8% increase on many of the services that, frankly, most of us would consider to be essential, like putting gas in our cars, heating our homes, being able to go to the sports arenas with our children and so forth. So there's a great deal, I think, that the minister could also include as part of his portfolio in consumer services.

The last one, Bill 187: It obviously took the ministry a year after the propane explosion to bring us a bill to debate in this House now. So there is lots to do in the role of Minister of Consumer Services.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll share my response with my colleague.

I'm glad to see that the minister stood up and said that he's there to protect the consumers of Ontario. That's a good thing. I will give him an example of something that we're failing miserably on, or the government is, in reference to the flooding that just took place in Hamilton.

The minister is from the Hamilton area and is well aware of the damages.

There were, I guess, some unscrupulous contractors who went in to do the repairs in people's flooded basements. The first thing out of some of their mouths was, "Are you insured? For what amount?" Well, the unsuspecting consumer would tell them, and what would happen was that the bill would come in—for example, if it was \$10,000 to do the repairs, the bill would come in at \$9,500.

One guy was a bit of a construction guy himself, and he watched what they did in his basement. All they did was cut the drywall at the bottom, at the half, and replace some rugs—the cost of the rugs—and the trim around the base of the drywall. In my experience, you're looking at maybe 3,000 bucks plus your man-hours. They were there for about a day and a half to do it, and they charged them \$9,500.

When they informed their insurance company, the insurance company didn't really put up a big fuss, because the insurance company obviously will raise their premiums. They also told them that there's a ceiling on how much you can get to replace your damaged material if it should happen again—the second and third time—and your coverage would progressively go down, but your premiums would go up. If that's consumer protection, I'm not quite sure.

I had several complaints in my office about these fly-by-night contractors coming in there, and not only did they come in there—most people ask for maybe two or three different quotes. These guys would come in and they didn't even give them any paperwork. There was no paperwork, no signed contract, no nothing. They went ahead and did the work, and the consumer was obviously put in a position where they weren't sure that it was normal procedure. I said, "Did you sign a contract? Did you sign anything?" They said, "No. The guy told me how much, he asked how much was I insured for, and away they went." That's pretty scary. These things happen on a regular basis in every city in this province.

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I'll be more than happy to share some of the quotes with the minister, and he might want to look into why they're charging maybe double or triple the cost of doing repairs in someone's flooded basement. These guys are getting away with murder here. It's unbelievable what's going on. So I'm very concerned about consumer protection in this province. There are other things I can mention, but I don't have the time. I'll be happy to share with him, and maybe they will take care of the people of Ontario, like he says they're going to do, and he'll be right out there with them.

Go ahead.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It's interesting to listen to this particular announcement made by the Minister of Consumer Services. I guess parts of this will be welcomed by some of those in our province, but I think we're missing one pretty basic element of what should be done, and that is the ability to cancel contracts such as energy contracts.

We have all had in our constituencies tens, if not hundreds, of people who contact us on a monthly basis who have been victims of signing energy contracts either with somebody selling natural gas or somebody selling electricity for what turns out to be a much higher price than what the normal utility would sell it at.

Often, they don't even know that they've signed a contract. There have been all kinds of cases in all of our offices where somebody comes in and says, "I was wondering what was going on. My hydro bill has gone up; my gas bill has gone up. I couldn't quite figure out what it was all about, so I finally got the time to look into it, and when I called my utility, I found out I was no longer their customer. I found out that in fact somebody had signed something"—perhaps a tenant who happened to be living in that person's apartment building, or it might have been a person in the household who didn't know what they were signing, be it a child or sometimes a spouse, who thinks they're doing the right thing and doesn't mention anything to the person who pays the bill.

In our constituencies, we have all had to go to bat for these people in order to cancel those energy contracts so that they're not preyed upon by those extra-high prices they're having to pay.

So I welcome this legislation that the minister brings forward in being able to cancel certain types of contracts, but I'll tell you, people in my riding are more worried about cancelling an energy contract than some LCBO card that they can't collect on at the end of the year.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to rise and present a petition on behalf of my constituents in the riding of Durham, one of thousands that I've received. This particular one reads as follows:

"Whereas Premier Dalton McGuinty is increasing taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas by 2010, Dalton McGuinty's new tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day. A few examples include: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas for the car, home heating oil and electricity; haircuts, dry cleaning and personal grooming; health care, home renovations and home services; veterinary care and pet care; legal services, the sale of resale homes, and," last but not least, "funeral arrangements;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election. However, in 2004, he brought in the health tax, which costs upwards of \$600 to \$900 per individual. And now he is raising our taxes again;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Katelyn, one of the pages.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have petitions signed by a number of Ontarians from Windsor and Amherstburg and they read as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have petitions provided by Murray Cressman of Kitchener, Mary and Bruce McInnes of Wingham, and C. Connolly of Cambridge, which read:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in the health tax, the largest tax hike in Ontario's history, but he still cuts health care services and nurses; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again on Canada Day 2010, with his new 13% combined GST, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% combined GST will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines, gas at the pumps, home heating oil and electricity, postage stamps, haircuts, dry cleaning, home renovations, veterinary care, arena ice and soccer field rentals, Internet fees, theatre admissions, funerals, courier fees, fast food sold for" under "\$4, bus fares, golf green fees, gym fees, snowplowing, bicycles, taxi fares, train fares, domestic air travel, accountant services and real estate commissions;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

As I agree with the petition, I affix my name thereto.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition from the people of Nickel Belt regarding PET scans.

"Whereas the Ontario government is making PET scanning a publicly insured health service; and

"Whereas, by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;"

They petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows: "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the Clerk with page Henry.

PROTECTION FOR WORKERS

Mr. Mike Colle: A petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas a number of foreign worker and caregiver recruitment agencies have exploited vulnerable ... workers; and

"Whereas ... workers are subject to illegal fees and abuse at the hands of some of these unscrupulous recruiters; and

"Whereas the federal government in Ottawa has failed to protect ... workers from these abuses; and

"Whereas, in Ontario, the former Conservative government" of Mike Harris "deregulated and eliminated protection for foreign workers; and

"Whereas a great number of workers and caregivers perform outstanding and difficult tasks on a daily basis" with our elderly and with our children "in their work...; and"

Whereas the federal Tories are no better than the provincial Tories were;

"We, the undersigned, support ... the Caregiver and Foreign Worker Recruitment and Protection Act, 2009, and urge its speedy passage into law" so we can undo the damage done by the Harris Tories.

I support this petition and I affix my name to it.

CHILD CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Minister of Community and Social Services, Madeleine Meilleur, has decided that grandparents caring for their grandchildren no longer qualify for temporary care assistance; and

"Whereas the removal of the temporary care assistance could mean that children will be forced into foster care; and

"Whereas the temporary care assistance amounted to \$231 per month, much less than a foster family would

receive to look after the same children if they were forced into foster care;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to immediately reverse the decision to remove temporary care assistance for grandparents looking after their grandchildren."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Rushabh.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition here from Ontarians from North York. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

1340

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased to present a petition from my riding of Durham, which reads as follows:

"Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that may result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors;

"Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in" small towns and mainly rural Ontario;

"Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten" dreaded "health tax since 2004," expecting of course that health care services would be improved rather than cut;

"Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch" and eHealth scandal;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need to attract and retain doctors."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Madeline, one of the pages, on her last week here at Queen's Park.

TAXATION

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas residents in Dufferin-Caledon do not want the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

I'm pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Jeremy.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I would like to thank Marjorie Stewart of the Ontario Genealogical Society for her work in gathering petitions throughout Ontario. This one is from Ontarians in Toronto, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition that reads:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in the Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces;

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I agree with this petition, I affix my name thereto.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition from the North York Historical Society, signed by a number of members from that society. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

LONG-TERM CARE

Ms. Sylvia Jones: This petition is to the Parliament of Ontario.

"Whereas Ontarians who now live in long-term-care homes are increasingly older, frailer and have greater complex care needs;

"Whereas our elder parents, family and friends deserve to live with dignity and respect;

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberal government failed to revolutionize long-term care and broke its promise to seniors to provide \$6,000 in personal care, per resident;

"Whereas five years of Liberal inaction has restricted Ontario's ability to meet the demands of our aging population;

"Whereas more than 24,000 Ontarians are currently waiting for a long-term-care bed;

"Whereas Ontario funds significantly less resident care than Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and New Brunswick;

"Whereas dedicated long-term-care homes are short-staffed and have not been given resources to hire enough front-line workers to provide the level of care residents require;

"Whereas devoted LTC staff are burdened by cumbersome government regulations;

"Whereas some 35,000 seniors are living in long-term-care beds which do not meet more home-like design standards introduced in 1998 by the former PC government;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government must enhance long-term care by:

"—initiating a sector-wide staffing increase of 4,500 full-time positions within a year;

"—expediting the redevelopment of Ontario's 35,000 oldest long-term-care beds by providing adequate support and funding;

"—achieving an average of three worked hours of personal care, per day, within a year;

"—simplifying the regulations which govern nursing homes;

"—producing a comprehensive plan with benchmarks to reduce long-term-care wait lists of more than 24,000 people;

"—addressing inflationary pressures by adequately funding the increased operating costs of long-term-care homes."

I support this petition and am pleased to affix my name to it and give it to page Henry.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have another petition signed by a number of Ontarians, once again from Toronto. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

Once again, as I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Mr. Bentley moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two

new Acts / *Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd ask at the outset that I share my time with my parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale.

I'm pleased to stand and address some general introductory issues with respect to this bill. It is a large piece of legislation, but it should be seen in the context of what it is: It is a bill that will address good government for the province of Ontario and for the people of Ontario. It contains quite a number of amendments, some technical, some improvements in procedures and processes, quite like legislation that has been introduced by previous governments, taking us back to at least 1994.

It's important, from time to time, to update legislation in the province of Ontario. The way we approach our business today is not the same as the way we approached business, well, even five years ago. You could ask a question, when all members are seated during those ceremonial occasions: How many people use a BlackBerry today who didn't use a BlackBerry five years ago? Communications go in an entirely different way. The procedures that were appropriate for government just five years ago are entirely, in some cases, outdated today. Likewise the wording, the technical provisions, their application of legislation, is surpassed by the events of time.

1350

We also have a situation where some acts which look perfectly important on their face have actually been passed by, given legislative changes that this act has enacted, given changes in the law as dictated by the courts, given new ways of approaching issues that the people of Ontario told us we have to use.

Une bonne gouvernance signifie mettre en place des systèmes et des structures adéquats pour exécuter l'intention originale de la loi. Good governance requires that we have the right systems, the right procedures and the right processes in place to enact the original intent of the law.

Now, there are really two very large parts to this piece of legislation. One is the technical procedural changes, sometimes to sections, sometimes to series of sections, some that repeal acts, some that change certain enactments. Just like has happened during previous governments, what happened here is that the ministries got together—in this case there were 22 ministries involved—and they came up with a narrowed list of 600 different provisions. It sounds like a big number, but when you think of the speed of procedures, when you think of the speed with which we move in society, it really isn't. These are technical changes, non-political changes, that will help the existing enactments work better, will help the intent of the Legislature—and it might have been a Legislature from a previous government—be achieved, which will ensure that laws can achieve their purpose, given the requirements of the day.

There are also, within the four corners of this bill, several changes to procedure and process. So they are a little different than technical amendments, but they are changes to procedure and process which I hope all members of the House, after the very complete debate, will agree are not only necessary but are appropriate and entirely within keeping of good, effective government. After all, what we wish to achieve are the right accountability mechanisms, the right mechanisms to ensure transparency, and the most effective procedures and processes for achieving governance in the province of Ontario.

I would say in advance that technical briefings have been offered to all members of the House, and that will continue. Should there be issues with respect to certain procedures, certain amendments, certain items in here, that certainly will continue. From our perspective, we want to make sure that there is a complete understanding of what's here.

I can also say that I'm sure we will benefit, all of us, from the debate within this House. Somebody picking up the very large piece of material may say, "Well, what's in here? What's in here that I haven't yet read?" I simply offer at the outset to the members what has already been offered, what has been taken up, I understand, on some occasions, and what will continue to be taken up, I'm sure: an offer to sit down and explain exactly what's there, why it's there and how we got there.

I would like to just address two separate changes to process and procedure, the first with respect to jury verification. Now, in the course of a criminal trial that involves the selection of a jury, the issue might arise, how do you ensure that the requirements of either the Criminal Code or the Juries Act—that people with criminal records don't end up on juries—are achieved? I'm using a little non-technical language here. How do you ensure that that is achieved? Unfortunately, there has not been a consistent procedure or approach to achieving the very important policy objective.

Recently, we benefited from the very extensive report, examination, discussion and review by the privacy commissioner—a very important document, a very extensive document that provided some guidance on how to ensure that we could achieve the policy objective and safeguard and protect the privacy of Ontarians, both to the greatest extent possible. The changes to the approach to the selection of juries speak to the issues raised by the privacy commissioner and speak to her specific suggestions in a number of material respects. One is that the identification, the checking and the selection process be taken out of the hands of the direct courtroom participants and put into the hands of the jury centre—there's one of those located in London, Ontario, that has been spearheading the compilation of the lists—that those checks be done independent of the participants in the courtroom. That's what we're going to be doing. That's at the heart of her recommendations.

Another part of the legislative changes is that these checks could be made and the lists amended before they

are given to the lawyers who are the courtroom participants about to choose the jury, so nobody would know; nobody in the courtroom will know who had a criminal record and who did not—again, a very clear determination that we want to safeguard the privacy of Ontarians.

It's essential that we do these checks independently, according to the privacy commissioner. It's essential that we have a recognized, coordinated structure within which to do them, as I say, so that we can achieve both the policy objective and the protection and privacy of all Ontarians.

I want to very briefly address one other area that is within the bill, and that's the whole issue of public inquiries. From time to time, people call for public inquiries. Sometimes they call for them quite often. But the legislation which supports the calling of public inquiries has not received the necessary update because when a government decides when a public inquiry is going to be called, what you're looking for are a series of recommendations to address specific issues that can be received in time to be of benefit to society, to the government, to the Legislature. There needs to be a connection between the calling and the receipt of the recommendations in order for them to be beneficial. Some inquiries should be, of their nature, long and extensive. Others should be capable of being completed in a much shorter period of time.

Recognizing the essential independence of the commission, which would not, cannot and should not be in any way, shape or form compromised, it is important to give the necessary tools to ensure that, where appropriate, inquiries can benefit from well-accepted information and material that's already out there—it doesn't have to be re-created—that expertise that's already out there can be adopted. Just as in the best courtroom management techniques, sometimes instead of calling witnesses one after the other, you can call panels of witnesses, you can have accepted facts. You can scope and shape an inquiry in order to achieve its objective. This not only helps manage the time, it helps manage the cost; but it ensures there is the type of essential rational connection between the calling and the reason for calling of the inquiry, and the receipt of the recommendations so that they can benefit the society—the Legislature—that has called for them.

1400

Just before I turn my time over to my colleague, I want to re-emphasize that we're very anxious to hear what the suggestions and comments will be with respect to what's in here. There has been a very extensive amount of work done by the people in the various ministries to compile these very important sections and amendments, and with respect to the more substantive pieces, it's a matter of updating procedures and processes to ensure that they benefit and serve the people of this great province.

With that, I'm pleased to turn my time over to my colleague the MPP for Willowdale.

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm very pleased to participate in this debate and speak in support of the proposed Good Government Act, 2009. Bill 212 reflects this government's commitment to making sure that Ontario's statutes are up to date and effective. As the Attorney General said, the right systems and the right structures must be in place in order for legislation to serve its intended purpose.

To this end, Bill 212 includes many technical changes as well as changes to some of our systems and processes. The bill is comprehensive; comprehensive because we have been diligent about making sure that the laws of this province are up to date, accurate and in line with the needs of Ontarians.

You've heard from the Attorney General, who briefly outlined some of the changes proposed in Bill 212. What I'd like to do now is take a minute to highlight some of the changes that are being proposed and how they will improve clarity, increase transparency and enhance accountability in the province's laws, regulations and systems. Let me say a few words about some general changes.

Bill 212 would, if passed, help to streamline processes and ensure Ontario's laws are clear, current and relevant. There are over 600 items in this legislation, and that's why we've provided members on all sides of this House the opportunity to be briefed on these items. We wanted to give all members a better sense of the amendments, some of which can be very, very technical in nature.

The Ministry of the Attorney General has a number of items that our ministry has included. For instance, a proposed amendment to the Evidence Act would allow witnesses to affirm, rather than swear, to the truth of their testimony. This change would acknowledge the multitude of religious views in Ontario and prevent any inquiries into why a person of a particular faith wishes to affirm rather than swear.

Sometimes it's necessary to update statutes to incorporate new processes or tools that were not used previously. The seven proposed amendments to the Bail Act would, if passed, serve to update language in the act to account for the new province-wide electronic writs database. This is a leading-edge tool to speed up and facilitate the judicial process. That's good for the accused, that's good for victims, and that's good for government expenditures.

These changes would remove outdated references to various manual requirements that are in fact no longer in practice. We've moved beyond that. These technical amendments are catching up to the de facto situation we find ourselves in.

Other amendments would reconcile statutes, update translation services and generally improve clarity.

Let me say something about the Provincial Offences Act. This bill makes changes to legislation that will mean more effective service for Ontarians. To further support this goal, the Good Government Act includes proposed changes to the Provincial Offences Act. Municipalities are currently responsible for administering the courts that

hear provincial offence matters and for prosecuting offences under that act, such as parking tickets and various bylaw offences. Most of the proposed reforms included in this bill reflect the recommendations of a municipal and provincial working group that put forward ways to simplify court procedures and to improve services to the public.

The bill proposes a series of very practical changes, such as allowing for quicker and more efficient filing of tickets and the ability to hold routine court proceedings via teleconference or video. The bill would also permit out-of-court settlements for a wide range of minor offences, which would help to focus the court and enforcement resources on the most serious offences. Many people in Ontario now charged with a minor offence want their side of the story to be heard, and to do that now necessitates a formal court appearance and all of the technical things that are included in a formal court proceeding. This procedure allows for out-of-court settlement of a variety of issues. Sometimes the person who has been charged with a technical offence really wants to talk the thing through and resolve it without having to go through the formal court process. That's the kind of practical amendment we're talking about in this legislation.

These changes would balance the need for significant improvements to our very, very busy municipal courts with the rights and protections of Ontarians who are accused of provincial offences. Everybody is going to benefit from these procedures, particularly the out-of-court settlement procedures.

Let me say a few words about the Municipal Elections Act changes, because I know that's a subject that is close to all members' hearts when they are explaining this legislation to their local municipalities, local councillors and local media. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing reviews the municipal elections process and the Municipal Elections Act after every municipal election. The proposed changes to the Municipal Elections Act included in Bill 212 stem directly from those consultations with the public, with the municipalities, and with organizations such as the Association of Municipalities of Ontario and the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario. If passed, these measures would respond to issues identified by municipal candidates, voters and election administrators, and would make the municipal election process more accessible, transparent and fair. There again we have a reference to the overarching theme of this Good Government Act: improving accessibility, increasing transparency, and, above all, fairness: fairness in the technical sense and fairness in the common sense idea of fairness.

Proposed amendments to the Municipal Elections Act would, if passed, enhance the integrity of the local elections in municipalities by creating a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction, in addition to the existing limit of \$750 per candidate. It will also, in this regard, clarify the campaign spending limits. Those of you who are following the press arising out of a number of municipal elections here in Ontario

know it is always and consistently in various jurisdictions an issue that plays out in the media in the year or two following a municipal election.

1410

Bill 212 is intended to deal with those difficulties, and it deals with those difficulties, again, by transparency, accessibility and fairness. Those are the overarching themes that underpin this legislation.

In addition, the proposed reforms would, if passed, eliminate the carrying forward of surplus campaign funds by candidates from one municipal election to the next municipal election while, at the same time, strengthening compliance and enforcement measures through firm deadlines for submitting financial statements and harmonized various penalties that may arise as a result of breaches. Other changes include moving the election date forward to the fourth Monday of October, beginning October 25, 2010; an improved voters list; and requiring voters to provide proof of identity and proof of residency.

I would like to particularly recognize the work of Minister Watson and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for all of their very hard work in bringing these amendments forward. A part of that exercise in bringing these amendments forward was the very extensive consultation process that the minister undertook with the various stakeholders in the municipal world.

As the Attorney General has said, Bill 212 is designed to strengthen statutes and systems that support the services the Ontario government provides to its citizens. The bill includes changes that will improve clarity, increase transparency and enhance accountability. These are changes that will ensure that the government, the laws and the regulations of this province are truly reflective of the needs of today's Ontario.

I call on all members to support these proposed amendments. Do keep in mind, again, that the proposed amendments are something that it's necessary to do from time to time to ensure that Ontario is the leading jurisdiction in the way it conducts, enforces and reviews its provincial legislation.

All governments—there have been, I think, about 16 of these omnibus-type bills that review and make technical amendments and bring needed changes to make sure that the application, interpretation and expectations of Ontario's provincial laws are very, very modern. By "modern" I mean that they meet the needs of all of the stakeholders in our province, that they meet the needs of our citizens and, indeed, that they meet the needs of our government, our bureaucracies, in ensuring that Ontario is always at the leading edge of legislation.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'll be having an opportunity in a few minutes to speak to this bill myself. I guess the first thing I want to really put on the record here is this consultation that everyone is referring to. I don't know what I missed out on here, but I haven't seen this consultation. I haven't heard from my stakeholders in my critic's portfolio or any of my municipalities about the

consultation that has taken place to get to this particular point today.

I look at a bill like this, and I acknowledge that many, many governments have passed omnibus bills, and you need these sorts of pieces of legislation to clean up a lot of outstanding problems in the different ministries. As we move forward with this, I think there's a bit of a problem with people not being aware of these changes and how they will have an opportunity to raise their concerns at the committee level. I'll be looking forward to hearing some responses from the minister on how we handle a bill like this at the committee level, when there are 22 ministries affected, and on how people will get a fair chance to voice their particular concerns on the legislation.

I will be speaking in a few minutes, and I look forward to bringing my points forward and commenting on the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Beaches–East York.

Mr. Michael Prue: I had an opportunity to listen to the minister and his parliamentary assistant, and they kept talking about the openness of the bill and the consultations on the bill and all of that stuff. I'm a little perplexed by those statements. I am perplexed because when this bill was introduced in this House last week, the opposition was not given any indication whatsoever about what was contained in the bill. We were asking, from the morning that we heard that the minister was going to make his statement until the time the bill was passed across the House and put on the desk, what was in the bill. Nary a word was said; nary a word about anything. If that is consultation, then I am really afraid.

I do acknowledge that I have had an opportunity to sit down with ministerial staff for about half an hour. They came but they were only prepared to brief me on one section of the act and then they were going off to brief other people on other sections of the act. I chose to go to those elements that dealt with municipal affairs.

I was really saddened, though, when I started to ask questions about what was contained in the bill, and even more so when I asked about what was not contained in the bill and the rationale for not including other provisions along with those that had been suggested. I was told time and time again by a staffer that that was a political question and it would not be answered. Even though it was a technical briefing, on such things as whether or not the loopholes were being closed—I like to call it the Volpe amendment—so that five-year-olds can't make donations, I was told, "That's a political matter. That's not a technical briefing of the act." They would not answer any questions as to whether or not that could be included.

I don't know, when the minister and the parliamentary assistant talk about being open and forthcoming to the opposition and others, that it in fact actually happens.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Brant.

Mr. Dave Levac: I'd like to take just a moment to express my gratitude to the Attorney General, Minister Bentley, for the work that he has to do to oversee this particular act, the Good Government Act, and to the parliamentary assistant, who, time after time, when challenged with coverage of a bill, does an exemplary job. The member from Willowdale and the Attorney General will be doing a very good job of bringing this bill forward.

Let's be clear in terms of the difference between staff and the minister's offer to have a discussion with elected members. The members opposite know that staff at the ministry levels are trained to identify a question that could be considered to be political and not to answer it, because the government and governance are the responsibility of the elected members. Let's make sure we understand the differential between the two.

If he were to ask a specific technical question and it were not classified as being political, then he would get an answer from staff. I would respectfully suggest that that is why the AG and the parliamentary assistant have made their offers to talk to the members in person.

Since 1997 there have been 16 good-government bills passed by the Legislature. The first of its kind was passed under the NDP government in 1994. The most recent bill, in 2006, contained nearly 550 technical amendments from 16 different ministries.

This is a technique that has been adopted over the decades by all stripes of government at all levels in order to clean up some of the stuff that, through modern technology or different verbiage, needs to be corrected. We assume that everyone understands that those are the processes we need to go through in order to improve our legislation. That's the intent here.

I recall reading a book that outlined some of the legislation that still existed at the municipal level that said you had to tie up your horses in front of the store at the stump post. Quite frankly, this is the kind of thing that we're doing with this piece of legislation.

1420

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Carleton–Mississippi Mills.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I was interested in hearing the member from Beaches–East York talk about the consultation, or the attempt at consultation, with regard to an omnibus bill. An omnibus bill covers many, many different acts. I think there are 60 different acts in this particular case.

The previous member, from Brantford, just talked about the fact that there had been omnibus, or large, acts before. But there's a difference in the process that your government is taking and that our government took. When our government was there, we went to the opposition benches and said, "Are there any sections that you object to?" And if there were sections that the opposition objected to, we withdrew them from the bill. We did that before we tabled the bill in this Legislature, so we actually gave the opposition parties a real opportunity to have a say with regard to an omnibus bill. We didn't

want to sneak anything in, under the carpet, when there are so many sections to deal with, so many acts to deal with. We wanted to be fair with the opposition, and we were fair.

Mr. Mike Colle: Ha.

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: Well, we were, quite frankly, in the process. Why don't you come forward to us, the opposition, with this bill and say that you, the government, will withdraw any sections which we object to? Will you do that? If you don't do it, then you are not as open as we were when we were in power.

It's unfortunate that this government continues to try to ram legislation through, and in this case, a huge omnibus bill. There is a great danger that when an omnibus bill is introduced and passed in this Legislature, some significant change in the law will take place without adequate notice to the public.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Attorney General has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I would like to thank the members from Simcoe North, Beaches–East York, Brant and Carleton–Mississippi Mills for their comments and observations. We will, of course, have the chance to debate these issues.

Technical briefings have already been offered, undertaken, and are ongoing. I would say to the member from Beaches–East York, I know he was in attendance at a technical briefing; the technical briefing continued after, without the member present, I understand, for some several hours, and will continue to the extent that he requires it.

I say that to all members. Of course there's a lot here. We want to make sure that everybody understands exactly what is here. It's interesting that the comments so far are about the process and not the substance. I'm sure we'll get into the substance at some point.

I would say with respect to consultation and the issue about changes to the municipal elections, I remember that we started a consultative process that has AMO involved at every level. With respect to the provincial offence matters, I would remind people that we have had a working group with municipalities for some period of time. I would say with respect to the general consultative process—and this is the difference between a political and a public service or ministry issue—you will find inherent in the suggestions and changes that are part of the 600-odd that some of these issues have been around for years, but they just never found their way into the appropriate technical briefing. They have to be done. They need to be done. Everybody agrees that they need to be done.

With respect to the Carleton–Mississippi Mills member's remembrance of the omnibus bills they introduced and the consultation, I would say that differs greatly from that of many members of this House.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate? The member from Simcoe North.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm asking for unanimous consent of the House to defer the lead of the PC caucus until a later date.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Dunlop asked for unanimous consent to stand down the lead for the Progressive Conservatives, the loyal opposition. Is that agreed? Agreed.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm pleased to rise today to speak on Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts. I think it goes by the name of the Good Government Act, 2009. I understand it was introduced in the House last Wednesday afternoon. This is the first time—I myself just got a copy of the bill this morning. When I came to my desk there was one in my folder here. I can tell you right now that although some of the things have been on the Web and I understand that there have been technical briefings offered to members of the House, we really haven't had a chance to caucus this or even look at any of the details in the bill.

Apparently, the minister said that there were 22 ministries affected, some 600 amendments or corrections to make. I know that although that seems like a lot, he sort of downplayed the fact that there were 600, and he didn't feel it was a major concern. That is a lot of information for a caucus like the Progressive Conservative caucus or the New Democratic caucus to look at.

We talked about the consultation that has taken place with this legislation. Again, I wouldn't have known until I read the bill that there was a good government bill coming down at all. Obviously we have omnibus bills around, and we've had a number of them in this House. I understand all the different parties have passed them. However, this has been quite a surprise to us. We won't even have an opportunity to discuss this as a caucus until tomorrow afternoon, when we meet and decide how we will approach our stakeholders. I think it's important.

When you have 22 ministries affected and this many changes, a "shall" or a "may" in any particular amendment can have a major effect on a lot of different stakeholders. That's my concern. What is in here may be well-intentioned as far as the ministries are concerned but may have a negative impact or a positive impact on someone else when the amendments are made, and could have a financial impact or whatever.

I don't know; I'm hoping that no ministry would want to sneak in some phrase that they would like to have seen for years. I'm not so sure that that type of thing happens in an omnibus bill. However, I want to make sure, particularly in my portfolio—and I'm going to go through the points in my portfolio here in a moment—that all of the stakeholders I deal with in community safety and correctional services know, each and every step of the way, what changes have been made.

You know yourself, Madam Speaker, that quite often when we have committee hearings on any bill—we had a subcommittee meeting here a little bit earlier on Bill 203, the interprovincial policing bill. It doesn't look like a very complex bill right now; in fact, it could probably fit in any one or two pages of this omnibus bill.

Even with this bill, it doesn't appear to be complex; however, we have to look forward and make sure we

notify all of our stakeholders so that they know what the impacts are and whether or not there will be an impact on their particular organization, association or on the individuals, whatever it may be.

As we move towards that, although the minister said that there's been a lot of consultation on this legislation, I'm concerned that there has not been enough consultation, and each and every one of us in our critic portfolios will have to go out and approach a lot of people to see if they have any concerns with it, get it on the website, send them copies etc., so that as we move forward, we'll know that they have been adequately served by this House, even with what the minister would refer to as these housekeeping types of corrections to the legislation.

I wanted to take a few minutes to talk about the Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services, in my particular case, which is schedule 9. There are a number of changes here, and a lot of them will have an impact.

"Ammunition Regulation Act, 1994

"The act is updated to reflect changes in the related federal legislation."

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For that particular amendment right there, I would want to contact all of my hunters' and anglers' organizations within my riding to make sure they know that this has changed and it's not going to have any kind of a negative impact on how they do business in their particular association.

It was the same thing when we moved forward with Christopher's Law (Sex Offender Registry) 2000. Corrections are made to the French version of this act. That seems fairly reasonable.

The Coroners Act: "Under current subsection 40(3) of the act, a judge may issue a bench warrant directed to a sheriff or police officer; this is amended so that the bench warrant is directed only to a police officer. Current clause 56(1)(c) of the act allows for regulations prescribing the composition of the oversight council; this is re-enacted to allow the regulations to also prescribe the composition of the complaints committee of the oversight council."

Unless I'm mistaken, I thought that's what Bill 115 was all about. We just finished passing Bill 115 in this House, and I thought we would have made those types of corrections on Bill 115. Correct me if I'm wrong on how we're actually going about this, but the Coroners Act was quite controversial. It goes back to Justice LeSage's report. I'm curious how we're now making an amendment to an act that we just amended just within the last year.

The Emergency Management and Civil Protection Act: "Section 10 of the act is amended to exempt operations or service continuity plans from the requirement that emergency plans be made publicly available." Again, this affects every municipality in the province of Ontario. Although it seems like a minor amendment, I want to make sure that our stakeholders and our municipalities are aware of that.

The next section is the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, 2006. "The definition of 'analyst' is re-enacted to reflect

the current name of the central public health laboratory and to allow for other laboratories to be prescribed by regulation. The French version of the definition of 'listed communicable disease' is corrected."

I just want to double-check on this one. This is one that I go back to my Police Association of Ontario, the Ontario Provincial Police Association and the Ontario Professional Fire Fighters Association—they were all people who had major concerns with the Mandatory Blood Testing Act, both my private member's bill that was passed in this House and the updated version of 2006. Again, we have concerns with that, and although they might be minor, they may have a major impact.

The Ministry of Correctional Services Act: "A number of obsolete references are deleted: the definitions of 'provincial director' and 'young person,' references to a place of open custody, secure custody or temporary detention and the Custody Review Board, references to the repealed Parole Act ... and Penitentiary Act ..., which are replaced with a reference to the current federal act, the Corrections and Conditional Release Act.... Clause 58(c) of the act is repealed since it applied to a provision of the act that was itself previously repealed."

There are a number of those here: "Amendments are made throughout the act to change the name of the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board." That would seem to be insignificant.

"Subsection 10(2) of the act currently provides that personal information about an individual may be disclosed by a person designated by the regulations. This is re-enacted to permit such disclosure by a person employed by the ministry and designated by the deputy minister....

"Subsection 34.1(2) of the act, which currently provides that the Ontario Parole and Earned Release Board has exclusive jurisdiction in prescribed circumstances to determine whether an inmate has earned remission, is repealed." I know that this appears to be strictly a housekeeping portion of the act. However, again, I've been dealing with OPSEU recently and people on the parole board and probation board, and they've got some concerns with the government and how they've handled some of the human resource issues etc. Again, I'd want to make sure that everybody was happy with that, although that part does seem fairly reasonable.

The Ontario Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals Act: "A definition of the term 'business day' is added to the act." When we did the OSPCA Act a year ago—I think that was Bill 105, if I'm not mistaken. We had a lot of interest and concern around that bill. Again, this wasn't brought up at that point, and I'm curious why we wouldn't have made those amendments when we did the Bill 105 hearings. As you know, there was controversy around the OSPCA and the Toronto Humane Society. I think, Madam Speaker, you were actually on that committee. Again, we would like to have a peek at that and the French-version changes as well.

The Police Services Act: "Subsection 18(4) ... which authorizes the commissioner of the Ontario Provincial

Police to appoint employees of the force, is repealed,” and “Clause 57(7)(c.1) of the act provides that an employee of the Ontario Provincial Police is not a member of the public and cannot make a complaint against a member of the force. This clause is repealed; since ‘member of a police force’ is defined to include an employee of the Ontario Provincial Police, the content of clause (c.1) is captured by clause 57(7)(c) of the act.”

Again, I would like to take that particular one to Karl Walsh and Jim Christie, from the Ontario Provincial Police, and let them run it by their legal people in the OPPA to make sure that there’s not some hidden clause that they have concerns with. I think that’s only fair, and it’s all part of the work we have to do as critics. I’m not 100% sure they all understand that, the members of the government.

Finally there’s the Private Security and Investigative Services Act, 2005. You talk about your transparency. As we move forward, this is a brand new bill, and still there are all kinds of portions of that bill that haven’t been enacted. I don’t know why that was not corrected at the amendment stage during the reading of the bill and the committee hearings on that bill. The reality is that I’m getting a lot of concerns now from people who think that this bill is nothing more than a cash cow for the government. For example, people have walked in—one journalist did a story on going into the ministry offices and just getting a licence to be a security guard without any type of training whatsoever. He just gave the money, and they gave him the licence. These are the types of things that you come back to, that you worry about when you hear these weaknesses in the bill. All of a sudden, we’re here making these sort of transparent types of changes that everybody apparently has been consulted on.

As we move forward, I also wanted to talk a little bit about municipal affairs. There seems to be all kinds of applause for Minister Watson and all the consultation he has done on it. I guess I have a couple of questions I would like to have someone answer for me. First of all, the changing of the municipal election date: I’m wondering where that really came from. I deal with nine municipalities, I’m a former municipal councillor myself, and I’ve never yet had anyone ask me to change the date to the fourth Monday in October. I’m curious as to why that was done. It would be interesting to hear the reasons behind it as we move forward. Again, I don’t think it’s going to be something that everybody would jump and yell and scream at. The second Monday in November, I believe, is the date today. However, maybe it’s something to do with Halloween; maybe it’s something to do with Remembrance Day. I’m not really 100% sure of that, but it is interesting why that was brought up as a major change. Quite frankly, I’ve heard a number of members of the government, both in media interviews and in this House, mention that this was the kind of change that was needed. I was just wondering where that actually came from.

It was interesting that a government that has a group supporting them called Ontario’s Working Families

Coalition would worry about election spending. I didn’t see anything in there that would stop an organization like Ontario’s Working Families Coalition from supporting a political party at the provincial level, but there seems to be lots of changes made that would help municipalities and people running for municipal elections with their funding. I know in my years on municipal council, coming from a small part of rural Ontario, we never got any support. We never asked for any money, and we never got any money from our constituents. We just financed our own campaigns, and there certainly wasn’t anybody dropping \$750 or \$5,000 off at our council chambers to help with our campaigns.

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It was also interesting to hear the Attorney General speak for quite a while in his opening remarks about the reasons to have a public inquiry. This is something that, on this side of the House, we’re really quite concerned about. This government, when they were in opposition, called for an inquiry almost every day into whatever was happening. One of the major ones that comes to my mind was of course the Walkerton inquiry, when people lost their lives. At that time, the government called an inquiry. They stalled for a couple of days, maybe two or three days, but then the government thought that was the right thing to do. People had lost their lives and there was a reason to have a public inquiry.

We feel very much that way today about the eHealth scandal. We think that is something that calls for a public inquiry, and I was really interested to hear the Attorney General’s remarks on that. I’d like to take it out of Hansard a little later on to see exactly what he meant by that. According to the Auditor General, there was almost \$1 billion at stake in the eHealth program, and we feel that when you’re talking about inquiries and you’re bringing in the reasons for an inquiry, in the opening remarks on Bill 212, it really does flag the reasons why, on this side of the House, we did ask for an inquiry. We will continue to ask for that inquiry right up until the time of the next provincial election, because, as I said earlier, when they were in opposition, they asked for an inquiry almost every day. You can go into Hansard and read it—an inquiry on this, an inquiry on this. Now, when there’s \$1 billion at stake, when there are concerns about how transparent the government is, when there are concerns about where \$1 billion went, especially at a time when we’re running almost a \$25-billion deficit, I think the general public has the right to know. Based on the fact that the previous government opened up an inquiry on Walkerton—Justice Dennis O’Connor’s report—I believe the right thing to do to be transparent and forthright with the citizens of Ontario is to actually call for an inquiry on what we call the eHealth \$1-billion boondoggle.

As we move forward, again, this is a completely new omnibus bill. As far as we’re concerned, there’s a lot of consultation that has to be done. I have no idea—and it would be interesting to hear from the Attorney General and the minister and any of the comments coming from

the members in the House—how much time they expect to have for committee hearings on this. Is this the type of thing that we're going to have half a day on, or will people from all walks of life who have a concern with these 600 amendments have an opportunity to come forward and propose their amendments and changes?

As the minister said earlier, it seems like a house-keeping bill. He talked about how we're all on BlackBerry now, how changes are made etc. But you know what? Everyone doesn't have a BlackBerry and everyone doesn't have a computer. Some people like to know exactly what changes are being made and some people like to follow the proceedings of this House very carefully.

It will be interesting to watch the amount of time that's dedicated to committee hearings on this. Is this the type of bill we're going to see rushed through before Christmas? Is that what the intention of the government is? Or is it something that we will have committee hearings on in the winter months and then move forward to debating for third reading in the spring session?

With that, I am pleased to speak to this bill this afternoon, and I look forward to a lot of debate on the legislation. Thank you very much for your time this afternoon.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Michael Prue: I listened intently to the member from Simcoe North and to what he had to say. Of course, this is a huge bill. This is a bill of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of pages. He touched on some of the aspects of the bill which I have not yet had a chance to consider, but when he focused in at the end on municipal affairs, my ears pricked up. He started to talk about municipal affairs and how he believes that this government is going to rush through the bill, ostensibly in order to meet the time frame of January 4, that being the date by which any changes must be made in order to have them within the full purview of the election year which starts on that day.

He talked about looking forward to debate in committee and the like. I can only echo his concerns when he talks about sending this to committee, because, quite frankly, this bill has not had much public attention.

As I started to say in the last two-minute go-round—and which I want to embellish and talk a bit more about when I have an opportunity to speak—this bill was brought forward, or at least the minister stood in his place and talked about the bill, on Wednesday afternoon. No advance notice was given to any members of the Legislature, at least not on the opposition side, on what the bill would contain. The 500 or 600 pages were passed across as he was speaking, and we feverishly tried to find out.

But what is even more important than that is that the bill was not generally printed and made available to the public until today, this morning. I'm waiting to hear from a whole broad group of stakeholders throughout the 22 ministries that are affected, about the hundreds of bills that are affected by the changes, because I do believe that this is something which ought not to be rushed through.

I don't know—the speed is positively dazzling to this point: Speak about the bill on Wednesday, print it on Monday morning, have it debated today and send it to committee as rapidly as you can, with the goal of having it finished before Christmas. I hope that's not the case.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Liz Sandals: I'm pleased to have a few minutes to comment on this bill. It is a large bill but I think it's important to note that many of the amendments—I have been sitting here, flipping through it—are to correct the French translation of something; to change the name of the ministry so it's currently accurate; to reflect some change that has been made in another act and make the two acts consistent. So while there are many amendments, a lot of them are truly technical in nature and really wouldn't be of any interest to the public.

I noticed that there are some substantive changes to the Municipal Elections Act. There has been some comment on changing the municipal and school board elections from the second Monday in November to the fourth Monday in October. My understanding is that that is because a number of candidates—as somebody who used to campaign in municipal elections—have noted that a lot of the campaigning you did in November was after the fall-back calendar change that we just went through and you end up canvassing in the dark. By moving the election date forward a little bit, the campaigning is done early. That may not be of any concern to the gentlemen in the crowd but it certainly is of concern to many women candidates that you're not trotting around in the dark.

The issue around the voters list for municipal elections: People may not realize that the process is different for federal and provincial elections versus municipal. For the first time this would allow municipalities to use information from the Registrar General, which includes who is dead—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Durham.

Mr. John O'Toole: I did listen intently to the member from Simcoe North, who dealt with section 9. I think the most important thing that he said was, in a précis here: The devil is in the details here. When you change the subtlety of words from "may" to "shall" and other legal terms, it's something that should be a wake-up call.

This actually comes down to whether or not you trust the Premier. If you promise one thing and you do another, you often lose the trust of the people of Ontario. That's really what's at score here.

There are some 26 sections in this and each of us, as critics, has a portion of the bill. I think there are 22 different ministries involved as well.

I'll just read the subtlety of one little section in the brief. It relates to the observation by the member from Simcoe North. This is in schedule number 16. It's the Perpetuities Act: "The rules of law and statutory enactments relating to perpetuities do not apply and are deemed never to have applied to a trust fund required by

subsection 9(1) of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act...”—what does that mean? Nuclear fuels—in my riding of Durham, the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act is a huge, ongoing, forward-moving liability, because there is no solution for nuclear waste. But that Perpetuities Act changes a word, which could be tested in the courts. That is just one example of one very small section in a 300-page piece of legislation.

The very next section deals with the Taxation Act. This one here is also a very important subliminal change of taxation. Schedule 17, which we’ve gone over, talks about subordinate pension funds for the public sector. So all this language is the issue, and I’m curious as to why they’re putting this huge legal bill into such a big document.

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The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I wanted to comment on the presentation just made and say that the member from Durham mentioned 26 sections of this bill, and it brought back nightmarish memories of an infamous bill here called Bill 26, which was the mother of all omnibus bills. It changed the whole health care system; it changed the municipal system. It was an incredible bill. If you want to see how this is so different from that incredible nightmare, Bill 26, and how it was rammed through and probably made the most significant changes in Ontario history—it was considered the biggest omnibus bill in Ontario history. So Bill 26—look it up.

Anyway, just to this bill, I think there are rational things done here to improve some of the technical aspects of government and also to refine some changes that have taken place, because as legislation is written—in Ontario, the tradition is to write it in both French and English—there have to be changes in both official languages. So that is one technicality.

But there are some areas that the Attorney General mentioned that he wants feedback on from the opposition. He’s willing to listen and he’s offered all kinds of opportunities for technical briefings. So I hope the members of the opposition will do that, and I hope the stakeholders in the general public will forward any questions they have about the impact of this bill in their general area, and that’s legitimate and fair. Hopefully we can get that feedback in place and make this good governance bill one that essentially makes government—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Simcoe North has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I’d like to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Guelph, Durham and Eglinton–Lawrence for their comments.

I really just want to say, as I mentioned a number of times during my comments earlier, that this is a complex bill. It’s not that a lot of these amendments aren’t necessary. I think that’s a foregone conclusion; there are omnibus bills around and have been in the past. But I am concerned about how many people—although they say there’s been a lot of consultation on this piece of

legislation, it’s the first I’ve heard about it. Okay? The first I heard about it was last Wednesday. I normally understand this type of legislation when it’s coming forward or know something is actually happening, like the Barrie–Innisfil act or even the cross-border policing act. With these types of things, your mind is sort of waiting for them to take place. This one we didn’t expect.

There are amendments to the City of Toronto Act—there are a couple here—not major amendments like the member from Eglinton–Lawrence was expecting. I think he wanted to go back and reverse the whole City of Toronto Act, and I’m amazed that it wasn’t in it. The reality is, you have an opportunity to put a private member’s bill through. Why—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Order. The member for Eglinton–Lawrence, please.

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: If the City of Toronto Act was so bad, can you tell me why they haven’t reversed it or revoked it? We hit a nerve there, eh? The reality is, you can talk and babble on all you want, but the bill was what everyone wants today.

So we look forward to extensive committee hearings on this. I think it’s important that all stakeholders that are affected by these 600-some amendments actually have an opportunity to know that they are taking place. Whether small amendments or large amendments, they need to know that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate?

Mr. Michael Prue: Just by way of comment before I get into the meat of the bill are a few questions and a few statements about the bill itself. When we were told there was going to be a bill brought forward and it was going to be a “good government” bill, of course we were wondering what that could potentially or possibly mean, because anyone who understands good government, or the origins of that phrase, would of course go back to the constitution of Canada, the British North America Act of 1867. The whole *raison d’être* of our parliamentary system was to provide peace, order and good government. So I was wondering whether this was a constitutional bill at all and whether or not that’s what was going to come about, as such.

Then my mind strayed a little and thought about how other jurisdictions applied good governance. The United Nations defines it as “participatory, consensus-oriented, accountable, transparent, responsive, effective and efficient, equitable and inclusive and follows the rule of law”—eight things for good governance. I thought that maybe this bill was going to be a little bit of that.

You can imagine my surprise when it was none of the above. In fact, this is a housekeeping bill. In fact, if you look at the purport at the beginning of the bill, and if you look at what is contained therein, it doesn’t talk about good governance at all in the paragraph saying what the bill is about. I don’t know who thought up the title, but certainly this is not a bill about good governance. This is a housekeeping bill and in fact, within the body of the

paragraph explaining the nature of the bill, it's quite clear that this is a housekeeping bill.

I am wondering why the government insists on calling this bill something that it is not. I think what they are trying to do is to convince people that they are a good government, or that they are governing properly, or that this bill is just something in a long continuum of government bills to do very little but to highlight various ministries.

When I think of good governance, I do not think of what is happening here in this Legislature. I do not look in terms of what this government is attempting to do, in terms of its lack of accountability, its transparency, its efficiency, its effectiveness around the whole issue—like the eHealth scandal. If this is a bill that is intended to make the government more efficient and effective and transparent and accountable, I would suggest this bill has failed.

I also look at this government in terms of its lack of success in increasing equity and inclusiveness in Ontario because I know the government has said many times that they want to do things about poverty and food bank use and the gap between the rich and the poor. Potentially that's going to be exacerbated by the HST. If that is the intention of this bill, I think this government has failed.

In terms of their good governance around the lack of broad participation in government decision-making, I go back some time now to when I was summarily removed from each and every poverty discussion that took place around Ontario because it was for invited guests and Liberal members only. I'm just wondering, is this the government coming to the conclusion that democracy should be participatory? If it is, I don't know why they took so long in consulting with people or letting the facts come out about this bill.

Then there's also the lack of responsiveness which the United Nations said has to be done for good governance. I give but one example, and that's dump site 41. To those who are opposed to the Clarkson gas plant and even those concerned about the health impact of wind turbines, it doesn't seem that ordinary people are being consulted or are being given all of the information that they need to come to rational and good decisions.

It's very important to examine this bill. Will it enhance participation? Will it increase transparency by making information about government decisions more freely available? Will it ensure that government serves all stakeholders within a reasonable time frame? Will it help to mediate the different interests in society to reach a broad consensus that is in the best interests of the whole community? Will it promote equity? Will it encourage effectiveness and efficiency? Will it promote accountability? Or is this bill, as I suspect and as the minister finally got around to saying, merely a housekeeping bill? It's changing a few little words, it's fixing up a mistranslation, it's tinkering around the edges, and it's really much ado about nothing.

1500

This is an omnibus bill. It's 300-plus pages—I think it's more than that, but I'm just going to err on the side of

caution and say it's about 300-plus pages—26 schedules, hundreds of sections of acts. It was introduced for first reading last week. What is contained in the bill was not posted on the website until Thursday. Second reading is being held today—Monday—and is going to continue on Tuesday and Wednesday. Think about how fast this has happened: It's introduced last week, it's put on the website on Thursday, it's printed today. Second reading starts today, Tuesday and Wednesday.

Now, it's very difficult for members in this House to get a handle on what is happening, but it is even more difficult for even the best-resourced stakeholders to understand and comment on this bill, not to mention those who don't have policy staff available to review the bill.

When I stood in this House last week to respond to the minister, I was at some considerable disadvantage. The minister, of course, is not at a disadvantage. The government members are not at a disadvantage. Most of them have had an opportunity to be briefed on the bill, to talk to the minister about the bill, to cheer on the minister, who reads his prepared speech made by his political staff on the wonders of the bill. Those of us on the opposition side scrambled, in the five minutes or so that we had to look at the bill, to try to come to some kind of conclusion on what was contained therein. It is a very difficult process, and I rather enjoyed the humour the next day when I commented on the possibility of municipal election day occurring on Halloween. I was chided by the Minister of Municipal Affairs in his most inimitable way; he talked about how I should go out and buy a calendar and other kinds of, I think, silly statements.

He was asked questions by the member from Huron—Bruce, but I would ask either of them to ever try to respond to a 600-page bill in five minutes, because I doubt very much that they could do it. It's very easy to sit there having all of the knowledge and to protect it and not tell anybody what's there, and then pretend that you are the fount of all that knowledge. The reality is that it doesn't happen, and the reality is that if I had a 100-year calendar in my pocket, I would have pulled it out. It's pretty simple. I'm waiting for the Minister of Municipal Affairs to tell me at what bank he gets one of those, because I've been looking for one for a long time. They used to be in the phone book; they were very handy. I used to use them a lot when I worked in the immigration department to try to determine dates, when things actually occurred and the days on which they occurred, but I haven't seen one for a long time.

Interjections.

Mr. Michael Prue: BlackBerry may have one, but I am one of those people who refuses to bring a BlackBerry into this House because I believe that the BlackBerry ought not to be in this House; in fact, that is the rule of this House, although I know that many members are sitting there texting as I watch. I know that that happens, but I believe this Legislature is a place for debate, a reasonable and rational debate.

It's difficult, as I said, for even the most resourced people to have that information right on the tip of their

tongue. So I have taken the opportunity over the last number of days to read the bill, sections of the bill, and to be briefed by people from the department. I would commend the minister for sending over his staff to talk about the bill, but they made it very clear to me that the section of the bill that would be of the most interest to me as the municipal affairs critic revolved around those sections dealing with municipalities, and I agreed. I came for the section to which I was invited, which was a round at municipalities. I do admit, due to the traffic problems in Toronto, that I was about three minutes late, but I was there for the entire balance of the presentation. I was very disappointed, with the questions that I asked, that they were all deemed to be political in nature and would not be responded to by the staff. Even though the staff seemed more than willing to answer them, the person from the minister's office made it quite clear that they would not be allowed to answer them.

I started to study some more, and I started to wonder why the government is proceeding at such a lightning pace. What is the impetus? Now, I do acknowledge that some of the changes to the Municipal Act and the Elections Act will have to be made in pretty short order. I understand that. But most of the other bills are of very limited consequence. Whether they take place before we break for the fall session or whether they're still around when we come back in February or March, I think, is of very little consequence.

It's not a good omen, I would suggest, for accountability, transparency and participation. The press release that the government put out talked about improving clarity, transparency and accountability. I fail to see, with anything that has been done so far, any reading of the bill, how that is going to be accomplished.

The explanatory note, as I said, to the bill stated, "The bill is part of the government initiative to promote good government," but the bill itself mentions housekeeping in its preamble and not good government.

So we have to look to each of the component parts, and I'm going to confine myself, now that I've prefaced my remarks with the whole process by which everything is hidden and is secret around here until the last minute, to what is actually contained within the body of the bill. The first thing is the provisions, and I'm going to talk only about two things: the provisions of the Municipal Elections Act changes and the Ontario Municipal Board, both of which come in the ambit of one of my critic portfolios. I'm going to leave the discussions of other sections of the bill and other ministries to other members of the caucus.

In terms of the Municipal Elections Act changes, there are some changes; some of them are welcome, and I want to talk about those welcome changes. But I also want to talk about things that are not in the bill that should be in the bill and to encourage the minister to make substantive changes when this goes to committee or before it goes to committee.

Some of the things that are in there: There is a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per donor per electoral

jurisdiction, and within that donation, there remains the \$750 limit per candidate. The second thing that I noticed in reading in there is that there is the elimination of the ability to carry forward surplus campaign funds from one election to another, starting after this election—I'm going to get back to why that's not good enough; starting with this election—and to have the surpluses turned over to the municipality. The third thing that we found that was in there is that there is a clearer definition of what constitutes expenses for fundraising. The fourth thing was that voting stations are going to be accessible, which is a good thing. The next one is that there are going to be changes to the voting process to require that all electors show ID, and I want to talk about that a little more later, too. The next one is improved tracking and updating of voters lists. And last but not least is moving the election date to the fourth Monday of October.

Now, in terms of these, the new contribution limit of \$5,000, I would welcome that, except that there is no teeth to it at all. The second one, the elimination of the ability to carry forward surplus campaign funds: I would support that, except it's not retroactive. There are people who are carrying forth campaign funds from the municipal election in 1999. There are others who have not been a candidate for years but have used a little-known loophole in the extant law to register for one day and withdraw and have that money go forward. None of that is going to be touched. There is a clearer definition of expenses for fundraising so that these cannot be excluded from campaign expense limits, except that there is no teeth to enforce it. Everyone must show ID. I mean, I'm in favour of everyone showing identification when they vote. I think it's absolutely necessary. There was some existence of election fraud uncovered in the past election and in elections that went before that. But I also want to ask the members, what about places where it's difficult to get identification?

1510

Some of you have travelled up and around James Bay and Hudson Bay and into remote reserves of First Nations communities where there are no birth certificates; there are no driver's licences, because there are no roads; there are no health cards. I've gone with Gilles Bisson up to his riding, and there are lineups of people trying to get health cards; it's very difficult to get those in the absence of information.

In most cases, they have no identification at all. Identification is the fact that they are known by their communities. They are known by the chief and the band council. They are known to live there. When they show up to vote, everyone in the town will know who they are, and will know if that is the guy he says he is or if he's from somewhere else—the towns are small. I don't know whether there is any provision here for people in First Nations communities who have difficulty getting identification, particularly young people who have not had a lifetime to obtain the necessary documentation, who simply have grown up, gone to school, unfortunately quit school all too early and are known only by their local community.

In terms of the fourth Monday of October, I welcome that change. I remember when I was a municipal councillor and later a mayor, we kept sending letters to the province, when they were asking for election changes, and we kept saying we didn't like the fact that the election was in December, and later that it was in November. Now, into October, it starts to make sense. The rationale we were given was that this dated back as long ago as Confederation. It was felt to be a good thing—municipal elections used to take place on January 1—because nobody was out working the fields. All the harvesting had been done, and everything that was necessary to be done could be done. Then they moved it to December, using the same argument, and to November, again using the same argument that most of the farm work had been done.

But the reality is that we are an urbanized society, and in most places, people who are running for elected office—they can be farmers too—are mechanized and have made the kinds of inroads that we can now afford to have the election in October. It makes sense to me that it takes place before daylight savings time ends and certainly before it gets cold, and potentially before some of the damage that is done on Halloween.

Just to reiterate and perhaps expand about the legislation and why I think it doesn't go far enough, I have to question—I questioned the staff and they wouldn't answer this, so perhaps the minister or the parliamentary assistant will answer—why donations from unions and corporations aren't banned outright. That would be the easiest possible thing to enforce. It's not here in this legislation. Instead, you have a \$5,000 limit.

We all know what has happened with that limit in the past. I asked earlier about, and gave the example of, the Joe Volpe scenario. You will all remember that he was running for the leadership of the federal Liberal Party, and on his list of donors were five-year-old children. He had to send the money back, but it was impossible to say where those five-year-old children got the money and why, having that amount of money, they determined they needed to give it to Joe Volpe. It boggles my mind.

I asked the staff when they were there, "Is there any provision, or are you contemplating any provision, whatsoever that would put an end to that?" They told me no. They told me that, under this law, five-year-old children will continue to be allowed to make political contributions in municipal elections. I asked the parliamentary assistant, "Is that what you want in the law? Do you want that?" If you don't want that, please do something about it.

The next thing: Why not ban the carry-overs of surpluses from pre-2007 elections to candidates who didn't even run in the 2007 election? We have people who have done that. One is a former member of this Legislature. I remember asking questions in this Legislature when he was sitting here. He registered to be a municipal candidate. We asked, "Is he a municipal candidate and doesn't he have to resign?" By the next day, of course, he had withdrawn his nomination, but the purpose was not

that he wanted to run; the purpose was not to embarrass himself, I'm sure, in this House; the purpose was to secure that money for a subsequent election. All of the rumours circulating around Vaughan are that he will be a candidate in this election, and he has that money that has been carried over. I wonder: Is that what we intend? Sure, you can ban it in the future, but why didn't you ban the practice? Why didn't you say, "You can't use those monies"?

The next election will be an unfair election. All of the people who have carried money over by any means at all from one election or five elections ago are going to have an advantage over every other person who is seeking elective office. That may not be true four years hence. That may not be true in 2014, but why have that continue today? Why is it important to this government that this unfair practice be continued? All of the money could be taken by the municipalities and put into a general revenue fund—heaven knows, the municipalities need the money—and if a candidate is that good, they can go out and get their own money. Some of them already have more money sitting in the municipal bank than they need to run in the election. Then you wonder why incumbents are re-elected and you wonder why ordinary, good citizens who want to participate in the democratic life of the municipality are scared off. I'm saying, if it's good enough for four years from now, it should be good enough now.

There is a great deal of difficulty in monitoring donations from multiple-link companies concerning the \$5,000 limit. People have, we all know, numbered companies; people own shares in companies; people are on boards of directors of companies. When you see company after company making a donation, whether it be \$750 or \$5,000, in a municipality, you have to know that some people are able to flout the law. There is nothing in here that will make that possible. An outright ban on corporate and union donations would make it nearly impossible to carry out that same rate.

Municipal election financing is overdue for reform. One need only look at the domination of municipal councils and some of the studies that have been done. I want to give special credibility to Professor Robert MacDermid. He shows that corporate donations form a significant percentage of donations in many municipalities and that at least 50% of the 2006 municipal election donations in the cities of Pickering, Vaughan, Richmond Hill, Brampton, Oshawa, Whitby and Mississauga came from corporations and developers. Does that scare this government? I think not, because they took not one bit of action against this. Does it scare people who are democrats at heart—and notice that I didn't say "New Democrats"—who want to have a fair system where ordinary people can participate in the process? I would say, very much so. Deep-pocketed real estate developers have too much influence over municipal election outcomes.

In the 2006 municipal elections, winning candidates received 54% of their funding from developers, whereas

the losers only got 35%. Councillors then vote on development proposals from the very people who funded their election. Is anyone surprised how they vote? Professor MacDermid did a detailed analysis of Vaughan, the place that likes to call itself "the city above Toronto" but which many of their residents refer to disparagingly as "the city above the law." They do so because of all of the shenanigans.

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When I had an opportunity in estimates to ask the Minister of Municipal Affairs about shenanigans, he was taken aback and said, "What do you mean by that?" So I detailed a great many of the 200 outstanding charges that are pending against three members of council. He said, "That's okay; the courts will decide about that." Then I told him about some of the other things, and ordinary citizens being forced to take huge court action. We read on Friday that an ordinary citizen has charged a fourth councillor with breaches of the Municipal Act and influence.

I asked the minister too: Did he make a statement, which is quoted in most of the Vaughan periodicals and the things put out by the city of Vaughan, that the city of Vaughan is a well-run council and a well-run municipality? He shocked the entire world by making that statement. I asked him about all of the changes that might be made, and he was not forthcoming.

Professor MacDermid's detailed analysis of Vaughan council decision-making between 2006 and 2009 shows that the council approved almost every single development proposal, usually without even having a recorded vote.

If you think ordinary people are not worried about this in the city of Vaughan, then I think you're mistaken. There are a whole bunch of people out there in the city of Vaughan who care passionately about their community, their municipality and election laws that are almost impossible to enforce. All Ontarians have the right to fair and unbiased municipal election results that serve the interests of communities and not private interests.

Election financing laws: When the Minister of Municipal Affairs was asked last week why he didn't take this extraordinary step, why the legislation is silent on this, he said it was because this isn't the law that we have in the province of Ontario, and we don't want to tell the municipalities that they should have one law when we in fact have another.

Well, there's a solution for that. It's not to go out and say, "Do as I say, not as I do." What is the right thing is to ask, is it right in Ontario that we continue to have laws that allow for corporate and union donations?

I would suggest to the parliamentary assistant, who heckled me on this, that I would gladly do away with union donations if we do away with corporate ones too. Although union donations in a place like the city of Toronto constitute 2% versus 35% for corporate donations, they are still not what we want to see. We want to see a law where ordinary citizens raise the funds, put forward their candidates, vote and have control of the

outcome, rather than have big, high-priced financing taking place. It is wrong.

The governments of Manitoba and Quebec already ban union and corporate donations while providing political parties with modest financial compensation. The government of Canada does exactly the same thing. The government of Nova Scotia, this past week, the brand new elected government, moved in exactly the same direction, and that will be the last unfair election, the one that just happened there, in terms of corporate and union donations, because if the bill is passed there, they will join the ever-increasing ranks of people who see democracy as not beholden to corporate and union interests but to ordinary people.

After seeing this bill last week, Professor MacDermid said, "I had hoped for something more, such as a ban on corporate or trade union donations." As I said, Minister Watson said it would be hypocritical to ban these, because they are allowed at the provincial level; in other words, because corporations are able to exert undue influence at the provincial level, they should be allowed to do so at the municipal level as well. That's another way of looking at his words.

The bill limits how much can be spent to \$5,000 per jurisdiction. In a place like the city of Toronto, where we are now, where I come from, where I represent, \$5,000 is pretty hard to spread around amongst 44 incumbent councillors and one mayor. Spreading \$5,000 45 ways is pretty small potatoes—it's less than 100 bucks.

But what about in other jurisdictions? There are 444 municipalities in the province of Ontario. Toronto is huge in comparison to any of the others. But in local municipalities across this province, in rural and northern areas, the norm is to have five councillors and a mayor or a reeve. That's the norm. That's what they have, that's what there is there. When you have five councillors and a reeve, then you have six people. You spread that \$5,000, and you can literally—you can't even do it; you're only allowed \$750 per person. You'll still have money left over. So I have to question, outside of Toronto, whether this limit is appropriate, because in the majority of towns in Ontario, it remains too high.

According, again, to Professor MacDermid, "Disclosure and campaign contribution limits [are] difficult to enforce" because the true ownership or control of private corporations cannot be known. The same individual can make numerous \$5,000 donations through associated or numbered companies, and that's just, unfortunately, the way it is.

In 2006, corporate donations in the GTA municipal elections exceeded 75% of total donations in Oshawa, Pickering, Whitby, Richmond Hill, Brampton and Vaughan, and not a single word is contained in the bill on this. This is the most egregious practice—not a single word. In Minister Watson's opinion, we can't go there because, in Ontario, we take that kind of money.

There is an opportunity and there would be an opportunity for a rebate program. Rebates now exist in Markham, Oakville, Ottawa and Toronto, and you will note

that none of these four municipalities that offer rebates get most of their donations from corporations. They give rebates. The City of Toronto Act allows for the city of Toronto to effect change around corporate and union donations, but also allows them and other municipalities like Markham, Oakville and Ottawa to have a rebate program. So if an ordinary individual and citizen sees fit to give \$100, \$200 or \$300 to their favourite municipal candidate, they can get a portion of that back, in exactly the same way that people who give to political parties, both provincially and federally, can get some of their money back at income tax time. The cities, in fact, that participate give a portion of the money back to those who participate in the election process, thereby taking away the influence of corporations and unions. So there is an option available, but this government has not seen fit to do it.

Second, the bill does not take measures to allow all municipalities to ban corporate donations. As I said, the City of Toronto Act allows the city of Toronto to ban corporate donations, and I believe that debate will be coming before Toronto council in the coming weeks. I can only encourage the councillors to vote for it. I have spoken to my own local councillor about the need to do so.

I would suggest that other municipalities be allowed the same degree of freedom, because only the city of Toronto alone of the 444 municipalities has that right. Other municipalities like Hamilton have asked for that right and have asked for the province to move on this accord, but of course the province has not. If the province is unwilling to move forward on this issue, then let the municipalities at least have that option, because I believe that the majority of them will struggle with it, but will see the right: that they don't want to be beholden to corporate and union interests.

The next thing that I found rather shocking in the last election was that the Liberals made an election promise, which they reiterated in 2004, that they would form a citizens' jury to make recommendations to the government regarding changes in how provincial political parties and election campaigns are financed. There is nothing in here—they've never done it. They did form a type of jury to look at proportional representation, but nothing whatsoever in terms of how provincial political parties in election campaigns are financed. They never set up the jury, and the only recommendation that ever came about donations was that they be disclosed within 10 days. It is clear that this remains a problem to many people.

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Donation limits as well are too high at \$8,400 annually to parties, doubling to \$16,800 during election years, with a combined total of \$5,600 annually to each party's riding association or election candidates. I would suggest we should follow the federal rules and lower that to \$1,100. Then and only then will we have the moral authority, the moral suasion to go to the municipalities and suggest that they too can act in that way.

The changes to the Municipal Elections Act are welcome—those that are there—but this is a very timid approach that will be nearly impossible to carry out. People in the city of Vaughan, particularly, write to me a lot because they're frustrated with this government. They're frustrated that they're trying to do something, that there are court cases—200 outstanding charges against the mayor and two of the councillors, more outstanding charges that were laid last week against a third councillor, and nothing seems to be happening. They write to me and they ask about this act, because they believe that this act in its present form, as put forward in this House, is unenforceable. There are approximately, they've said, 200 contraventions of the elections act between three sitting members of council in Vaughan, and all three members are still there voting, three years after the election, because the process is not a good process.

Then the government talks about setting up a mandatory committee that council will establish to review audit requests. How is that going to be set up? It's going to be set up by the council following the election. They're going to set it up, I think, with people who are known to the council—the councillors and the mayor—without checking; there is no requirement to check on their reliability, their thoughts. It's not like the process that goes on here at Queen's Park. The citizens of Vaughan are worried that should such an audit committee be set up, it's going to do exactly the same thing as councils.

I remember my frustration at the megacity. Following that election in which the municipalities of Toronto were formed into one large megacity the citizens did not want, still don't want, still don't need, they set it up. There were 57 of us, 57 people in that council. I remember in that council the debate that went on in that election and the subsequent election about people flouting the rules, particularly in the subsequent one.

There were two egregious examples where it was brought forward to council, and what was council going to do about it? One of the examples was extremely well documented. One of the losing candidates had affidavits; he had pictures showing that the winning candidate had put up signs illegally, had put them up in advance of the time, had taken contributions illegally. It was extremely well documented. He brought forward the case to the council and the mayor. The majority of council said, "No, we're not going to investigate this because if we investigate this councillor, then who is to say that we ourselves could not be investigated?"—the exact words coming from the then mayor, Mayor Lastman.

The other egregious example that happened during the same election involved Mayor Lastman himself, because he had a huge amount of money. You have to remember, in the second campaign he was running unopposed, or virtually unopposed. He had huge amounts of donated capital that he didn't need to spend in order to win. So what he did is, he farmed some of that money out so that people that he was supporting would do a mayoral piece in which they were included with their arm around the

mayor, that it would only be put out in their prospective municipal wards, and that it was entirely paid for by the mayor. These councillors who were on the mayor's team were given the gift of free literature which they could pass out, pretending it was a mayoral campaign. When this was brought to people's attention, the mayor told the council that it should not be investigated—because he didn't want to be investigated either—and that, in fact, it was all well and good and the mayor should be allowed to support those candidates that the mayor wanted to. Council, in its wisdom, again, voted not to enforce the law and not to ask for a review, and didn't do it.

I am afraid that this same kind of thing is going to happen here with what is being suggested, because this group of citizens appointed by council and known by council may take the same way. The only fair thing that can be done—and I've talked about it in this Legislature before—is to have the electoral authorities who work for the province of Ontario also monitor those things that happen in the municipalities. I would agree that it may take a few additional staff, but they are staggered at different times so that there would be the opportunity to look at whether there were other egregious examples, whether there were other fall-downs in the law, and have something done about it. But there is nothing contained in this bill. There is nothing at all. I think the provincial body needs to oversee the audits of these elections.

With the few minutes I have left, I want to switch gears. I've talked enough about municipalities. I think this government needs to have tougher legislation. We know the problems that exist in some places. We know that whole gut-wrenching situation in Vaughan particularly, with everybody being charged and in court and a municipal council that I would suggest, with the greatest of respect to Minister Watson, is not working well. We need to make sure that the people have the best representation possible. But I would like to turn my attention now to the Ontario Municipal Board Act changes.

This was one of the ones that I saw right away, because it was of interest to me when I opened up that bill in my five minutes. It took away the rights of ordinary citizens to appeal decisions from the Ontario Municipal Board to the cabinet. Now, this has been a right that has existed in Ontario for absolute decades, and this right has been taken away.

But over the weekend I had an opportunity to read in more depth about the Ontario Municipal Board Act changes, and another thing came out. The thing that came out was that it removes the restrictions on members of the Ontario Municipal Board relating to investments or employment in municipalities, railways, and public utility companies. I have to question why. Why does this government want to remove those restrictions? In the past, OMB members could not be employed by municipalities, railways and public utility companies, for a very good reason: because they are there to pass decisions on land use planning matters, the land use planning of the municipality, the railways and the utility companies that own the transmission lines, the railway tracks

and the municipal land. So they could not be seen to be beholden to the municipality or to act against the municipal interest when an ordinary citizen came forward.

This is being changed. Can any government member tell me why you are going to allow OMB members to be employed by municipalities, railways or public utilities? It makes absolutely no sense to me, and I think we need an answer to that.

The second thing, and back to the first point that I saw: It ends the petitions to cabinet on decisions by the board. The cabinet has been a safeguard. Although the appeal process is poor and the entire appeals process for a generation has been cloaked in secrecy, and some have said it is biased against ordinary people with fewer resources who lack access to decision-makers, it has been a safeguard. I have seen it used twice in the former borough of East York. It was used once when True Davidson was the reeve and subsequently became the mayor, so this would have been back in the 1960s, on that building which stood on the Bayview extension that became known as the Bayview ghost. Anybody who ever drove by it—it was an apartment building that they started. They put it up, but before they could put the wiring inside, before they could do anything—the Ontario Municipal Board had approved it—cabinet came along and said no, it wasn't appropriate and good land use planning.

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The owner of that building had it there for many years and subsequently and fortunately, while I was mayor, sought permission to tear it down. It was there as an eyesore on the Bayview extension for all to see how land use planning and the Ontario Municipal Board did not do the right thing. It was cabinet that determined that that was not an appropriate use under the act, and it was cabinet that stopped it cold. It was cabinet that also set out what was appropriate on that land so that at the time when I was mayor, it was a fairly easy decision when the developer sold the interest and a gentleman came forward and said, "I've bought this land." We said, "Well, don't come to us. This is already the subject of a cabinet order, and this is what you can build on this land: You can build houses. You can't build multi-residential, you can't build commercial, you can't build industrial, but you can build houses." He went away and he determined—what else could he do? But I think the decision that was made by the cabinet was a good one. It was a decision that the OMB would not make, and it was a decision that the municipalities would not have gone ahead and fought through the courts because that is a huge and expensive proposition.

The second example is a much better one—much, much better. I was a wannabe councillor. I was running in the municipal election; I ran three times municipally before I won. But I do remember the first election in which I was running, and I remember that the whole debate was what to do with the Brickworks, again on Bayview Avenue. The Brickworks had been sold to a development interest, and the people who lived in the

immediate proximity and, in fact, most East Yorkers wanted the Brickworks to be kept for public use. They wanted it to be a type of park; it is in the flood plain of the Don Valley.

The development interests, of course, got hold of it, and they went to the Ontario Municipal Board. Of course, to nobody's surprise, the big deep pockets and the lawyers and the planners and everybody else they had won. But the Ontario government was then asked to intervene and, I think to the everlasting credit of the Peterson government and particularly to the minister at that time, Lily Munro, they stepped in, and they stopped the decision. They stopped the OMB decision cold, and they substituted the decision that it was to be made for public use.

I invite anybody who has not been there to come by the Brickworks and see what is happening. It has been taken over by a group called Evergreen, which has a lot of federal and provincial money. They are restoring the majority of the buildings that were once used to make bricks, the bricks that helped to build literally all of the major buildings in Toronto, including this one. The bricks came from the Don Valley Brickworks. They saved it. It is a park. It is filled with ponds. It's almost a complete little piece of wilderness, with fish and birds chirping and frogs and everything else when you go in there. It is just amazing, plus the industrial heritage, and it's there.

I think this was an excellent and a brilliant idea on behalf of the government of the day and the cabinet. Again, it was a Liberal government. It was the Peterson government and Lily Munro who stepped in and who saved that for all Torontonians.

I think that we need to keep that option open. This bill does away with that option. I don't know why the government wants to do away with that option. It may be cumbersome and it may be difficult for governments from time to time to step in and have to overrule the Ontario Municipal Board, but when it needs to be done, it needs to be done.

These are only two examples in my community. I'm sure there are examples in a great many others. I know that down around St. Catharines there was a whole debate about the minister intervening to save the historical properties in Port Colborne. There's a whole debate taking place around that, asking the minister to intervene. The people from Port Colborne wrote to me last week and said, "Will you help us get the minister and the cabinet to look at this," in terms of an override of the Ontario Municipal Board decision, which freely acknowledged that this is going to destroy many of the heritage properties, should the developer get what he wants—the board has already ruled in the developer's favour. I had the sad duty of writing back informing them of the provision in this bill that is going to take away that right, and that I'm sure everybody on the government side of this House is going to vote for that provision, although I don't know why. The cabinet should have the final say in preserving some of our historical and heritage properties and in looking at land use planning matters where the

environment is involved, as it was in the Brickworks and to a lesser extent, but somewhat, with the Bayview ghost.

It is a safety valve. The one advantage of cabinet appeals is that they ensure accountability by the government for what are genuine and generally policy decisions by administrative tribunals. The decisions made by the OMB are essentially policy decisions in the land use context, and it is difficult for them to be judicially reviewed by a divisional court. Cabinet appeals do provide the safety valve when the tribunal's decision is reached largely on the basis of facts or policy considerations that do not favour public interest clients.

We need the reforms, but the reforms need to be set out in statute, as in Quebec, so they cannot be readily overridden by future governments. There is the whole question around the appointments process; there is another question around the process of ensuring that people at the OMB possess the expertise they are deemed to have, free of patronage considerations; there is the whole question, too, of intervener funding. None of these things are contained within the bill. The only two things that are contained are both problematic to me; that is, that citizens lose the right of appeal to cabinet, and the whole difficulty of Ontario Municipal Board people being allowed to work for municipalities, railways and utility companies.

In a nutshell, we have some considerable difficulty with these two sections of the bill, the only two to which I'm going to speak. They were given to us in a rush. They were given to us, and copies were not made available to the general public until this morning. We are now faced with three days of hearings completely in a row, and I can only assume that the government is intent on pushing this through as rapidly as possible.

I would concur that there is a need for rapidity on the section dealing with the Municipal Act and Municipal Elections Act, and I would concur that if the government wants to carve this section out and deal with it quickly so that it can be the law and the changes that are necessary can be the law by January 4, we would do everything in our power to facilitate that. Although we do have concerns and we do want a stronger bill and we do want changes made to that, this can be accomplished, with goodwill on all sides, by January 4.

I fail to see, though, why the other sections of this bill have to be dealt with in such rapidity. If they are merely housekeeping—the combining of acts, the changing of legislation, changes of titles, changes of mistranslations from French and a whole plethora of other things—and not to do with good governance, then let us take our time to do it right. It is 600 pages. Let us do it right. I am asking that this bill go to committee, and I am asking that people be consulted. But I am also asking that the government consider severing the bill in two parts: those that are essential and have to be done quickly, and those which are not essential and that we can take our good and marked time to do right.

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Those would be my comments on this bill. I await my colleagues; I hope they've been listening and will

provide some input on what I had to say. I think that for this bill to be successful, for this bill to truly meet the standards that we expect, to truly be open and transparent and part of everyday people coming forward to talk about what is necessary and what can be done, we have to do it right, we have to do it as slowly and as carefully as possible, and I'm asking this government to consider exactly that.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to make a few comments about the Public Inquiries Act, because that has come up.

Over many years, there have been a number of public inquiries here in Ontario. Some of the public inquiries have been lengthy and complex, and media reports in the paper were indicating that they were convoluted and perhaps from time to time had lost their sense of direction.

What we've done in coming up with these amendments is, we have taken the advice of people who are close to these public inquiries, who have given us advice about what worked well, what didn't work so well and what perhaps caused some of the difficulties, the unnecessary complexity and costs of these public inquiries.

There have been some recent public inquiries that indeed have been models of efficiency in terms of dealing on a very timely basis with the heart of the issue at hand, preparing their report and delivering that report to the appropriate ministry. We've consulted with the participants of those public inquiries, people who were close to them. Again, they gave us their best advice on what worked well, what didn't work so well, various improvements and so on.

We have taken that advice and incorporated that advice into, and it forms the basis of, the amendments and the changes to the Public Inquiries Act. Again, the motive behind this was efficiency, transparency and effectiveness. Public Inquiries Act amendments—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. The member from Wellington—Halton Hills.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I was pleased to hear that tour de force from the member for Beaches—East York. He's a well-known epicure; I know that. I know him quite well. On Sundays, he spends most of his day preparing meals, cooking and baking for the week ahead. Obviously he spent a lot of time studying Bill 212 on Sunday as well, given the information that he imparted to the House today, and I want to compliment him for that.

I haven't had the chance to consult with my constituents on Bill 212 to the extent that I normally would want to. Obviously, on October 27 this bill was introduced in the Legislature. Our caucus has not yet had a chance to even discuss it, to determine what our position is going to be, yet the government has called it for debate. It makes you wonder what is buried in these 288 pages.

I've had a chance to have a cursory review of it. This bill opens up I don't know how many acts in almost every ministry in the government. The government

would lead us to believe that it's all good stuff, it's all brought forward in a collegial manner to improve—they call it the Good Government Act. I have my suspicions that there's a lot in here that needs to be studied in great detail. I've asked for the advice of the municipal politicians in my riding about the changes to the Municipal Act. I have not yet received a great deal of feedback from them.

I would hope that the government is going to give us an indication soon that this bill will in fact be sent to a committee for public hearings, because I think that we need to have an extensive review of all of the provisions in Bill 212.

Without question, the government is wanting to move forward, to turn the channel on some of the scandals that we've talked about in the Legislature in the last few months. But at the same time, I think that it is incumbent upon the government to ensure that Bill 212 receives its fair hearing.

Again, I want to congratulate and commend the member for Beaches—East York for the information that he provided to the House this afternoon. I look forward to continued debate on Bill 212 as this unfolds.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes this afternoon to speak, respond and make comments on what we heard across the aisle on Bill 212.

I would like to make a comment first about the aspect of technical briefings. The member did talk about the technical briefings and what he perceived as being a little bit different than what actually happened. He noted that his questions were not answered because they were of a political nature and not technical. Well, I think the technical briefings are just that: to go through this bill, to give the member an understanding of what's in the bill, and what is covered in those, I believe, 22 ministries that are affected by this bill. I did go through, and I believe I did count up 22 different ministries that are impacted by aspects of the bill. It is not a briefing to debate what was not included or what the member believes should have been included.

That discussion is something that happens here in this Legislature during, first of all, debate, when you can give your ideas and thoughts, and also during question period. Question period is that time when you give political questions, when you throw those political questions across the aisle. That's where it's done. It's not for the officials who engage in those briefings to take part in the debate. They're there to give the ideas, to give an understanding of what is covered in this bill.

I think, too, that the member was just recently—it was not very long ago that the member did have a question that he asked the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing on the Municipal Elections Act, and I think that's where that dialogue can happen—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: I do appreciate an opportunity to make comment on the leadoff speech from the member

from Beaches–East York. I think he reminded me before that there was a difference between “Beach” and “Beaches,” and I know that there has been a discussion going on. I think it’s still Beaches–East York, right?

Mr. Michael Prue: It is.

Mr. Dave Levac: Yes, thank you. He nods yes.

His concern laid out with regards to the breadth of coverage in the bill acknowledged that a very large portion of it—and he can confirm whether I’m right or wrong on this—is indeed technical in nature, and that probably one of those bills inside of this has these requirements that need to be changed, modernized and updated. I referenced this earlier in the debate that I was having about other levels of government still having hitching post laws still attached to their bylaws in city councils, where you can’t hitch your horse up to the post outside of a store, and you have to sweep the wooden sidewalks—that kind of stuff.

But having seriousness to what his concerns are, the one concern that I do have is his implication, and maybe he can correct me if I’m wrong, that if any member votes against a certain portion or votes for a certain portion of the bill, they’re wrong, they’re making a mistake. I think somewhere in there he implied—there was a section that he referenced where, in his interpretation, if the back benchers support the legislation, then they’re most definitely wrong and shouldn’t be doing so. Having said that, I’m curious as to whether he could correct that for me, because I know the member, in debate, does not impugn anyone’s desire to vote for or against the bill. He’s just sharing his opinion as to whether or not he would support it, but I’m sure he’s not saying that we are wrong if we do vote for the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Beaches–East York has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Michael Prue: I would like to thank the members from Wellington–Halton Hills, Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry and Brant for their comments.

I am perplexed, though, by the member from Willowdale. I didn’t talk about what he had to talk about at all. I never mentioned one thing, so I don’t know what he was listening to or why he made his comment.

The member from Wellington–Halton Hills correctly pointed out that I believe that there should be an opportunity to review and to consult, and I’m looking forward, if this bill does go to committee, to exactly that happening. I don’t think that the time frame to date has allowed for any review or consultation, certainly not with members in this House, and the broader public has only had the copy of the bill available to them since this morning.

1600

The member from Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry talked about a technical briefing, yes, and I do know some of the people—even the staff within the technical briefing were willing to answer my questions; however, the person in charge was not allowing them to do so, and that was quite clear.

For the member from Brant, I’m perplexed and I am puzzled. I think every member in this House needs to vote for what they believe is correct. Whether they be on the government side or on the opposition side, they need to vote for what they believe is correct. I was talking about the municipal elections. The only time that I remember talking at all about voting was those people in the city of Vaughan who are municipal councillors and the mayor continuing to vote on every single aspect, although there are 200 outstanding charges against them. The city and the residents of the city of Vaughan do not think that the law as it currently exists is correct, and this law certainly will not help to end that practice. If people have broken the law, they ought not to be there, in positions of public trust, voting.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I’m pleased to recognize the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: And francophone affairs. Merci beaucoup, monsieur le Président.

I am honoured to rise in the House today to speak on our Good Government Act, 2009. As honourable members know, my ministry has submitted a number of proposed housekeeping amendments to several acts that are administered by the Ministry of Community and Social Services.

La plupart des amendements proposés par mon ministère sont secondaires. Ils sont faits avec l’intention de continuer à offrir aux citoyens de l’Ontario un gouvernement fort et efficace.

La responsabilité législative de mon ministère est vaste et englobe la législation concernant l’amélioration de l’accessibilité, la prestation des services sociaux aux personnes vulnérables, et le soutien communautaire aux personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle.

Our ministry focuses on people, on helping vulnerable individuals and families who comprise Ontario’s strong and thriving communities, and my ministry’s legislation reflects that. Under the Good Government Act, 2009, my ministry has proposed amendments to our landmark Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005. This groundbreaking legislation is helping to improve accessibility in all walks of life. This legislation will continue to guide us in our journey towards an accessible province by 2025.

I want to take this opportunity to thank all honourable members for unanimously passing this legislation more than four years ago. That support has helped to propel our accessibility goals, and we are well on our way to reaching our goals. We are also proposing amendments to our social services legislation and to one of my ministry’s newest pieces of legislation, the Services and Supports to Promote the Social Inclusion of Persons with Developmental Disabilities Act, 2008.

La nouvelle loi de l’Ontario sur les services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle, adoptée en septembre dernier, est le fondement de notre travail qui consiste à créer des services aux personnes ayant une déficience intellectuelle qui sont modernes, équitables et

durables. Cette nouvelle législation aide les personnes qui ont une déficience intellectuelle à obtenir les services et les soutiens appropriés et ainsi à participer pleinement à la vie de leur collectivité.

The new act replaces the 34-year-old Developmental Services Act, written when services were provided mainly for people living in government-run institutions. As honourable members know, our government last year closed the remaining three provincial institutions that had housed nearly 1,000 people with developmental disabilities. Our new legislation helps us build a modern, sustainable developmental services system that reflects how people live today—in communities, not in institutions. For people with a developmental disability and their families, it means better service, more choice and fairness.

We have also proposed changes to legislation that impacts our Family Responsibility Office. The Family Responsibility Office deals with one of the most difficult, emotional and adversarial issues individuals can face: the breakdown of the family. In recent years, our government championed strong legislation that gave the Family Responsibility Office new enforcement tools. With our proposed amendments, we intend to ensure that legislation continues to support the strong enforcement of court orders so that Ontario families, and especially the children, get the money they are entitled to.

We are also proposing amendments to a lesser-known piece of legislation that my ministry is responsible for: the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998.

Vous n'êtes pas sans savoir, chers collègues, qu'un ministère tel que le nôtre ne peut offrir tous ces services sans la collaboration de nombreux partenaires. Ce n'est possible que grâce aux milliers de femmes et d'hommes dans les différents ministères, les municipalités, les agences et les organismes communautaires qui travaillent sans relâche et avec dévouement à la mise en œuvre de nos programmes.

Often at the front line, you will find a social worker or a social service worker offering a critical lifeline to an individual or a family in need. The regulation and professional designation for social workers and social service workers is handled by the Ontario College of Social Workers and Social Service Workers, which operates under this legislation.

As part of my ministry's 2006 report on the five-year review of the Social Work and Social Service Work Act, 1998, we agreed to the proposed amendments included in this omnibus bill, as requested by the college. I am proud to support these proposed amendments because, as a member of provincial Parliament, I see first-hand the positive difference that social workers make in the lives of so many people. I am humbled by the personal commitment and the caring that social workers demonstrate amid intense pressures and competing demands. Social workers are critical to all of our cherished social institutions. They provide essential services to women and children who are victims of abuse, people who are homeless, and those who are facing difficult times. I am

proud to put forward these requested amendments that will help the college do its job better.

J'espère poursuivre mon travail en collaboration avec tous mes collègues de l'Assemblée législative afin d'apporter un soutien aux Ontariennes et Ontariens qui sont dans le besoin. Je compte sur la qualité et la durabilité de nos programmes et services afin de protéger les citoyens de notre province, renforcer nos collectivités et donner aux familles toute l'assistance dont elles ont besoin pour améliorer leurs conditions de vie.

I call on all members to support this proposed legislation and to support our government's continuing efforts to provide good government to the people of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm very surprised that the minister spoke so briefly, yet so eloquently, on the institutional changes in Ontario. I think that all members of all parties support that.

I think what I most want to hear in her rebuttal on this thing is, what is she doing to make things more transparent, open and accountable? If I think of the adoption changes, they're still not working exactly the way they should.

1610

There are other issues, certainly with children with special needs. It's my understanding that the money is being put back and there's no money for them in the ministry. I know this doesn't specifically apply to the bill, but what we're trying to do here is sell this as good government. It's a good government bill, but it's by a bad government right now; they're in the penalty box. It's a good government bill by a bad government.

Look at the polls. I'm not trying to be provocative here; I'm just reading the media.

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Madam Speaker, with all due respect, I'm reading the media here, and the compliments they gave our leader. Jim Coyle's article in the Toronto Star is worth reading.

The government really isn't doing exactly as it is says, and the bill itself—good government? Good gracious. If the minister really had something to say on this bill: 300 pages, and you speak for less than your allotted time, Minister. I have the greatest respect for the work you're doing, but it's not enough. I'm going to speak briefly—I think I may be forced to. I wanted to speak more thoroughly in the time allotted to me, but they've rammed this thing through. Madam Speaker, you would know. On October 27, just last week, they introduced it. We haven't even had briefings on it yet and we haven't caucused it is yet, and she's throwing this at us as if we know what the heck is going on. I'm sure she doesn't know.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: First of all, I congratulate the minister for what she had to say on the bill. It reminds

me a little bit of what happened many, many years ago when, after the battle of Gettysburg, someone came to preach, and preached for two hours about the battle, the significance of the battle and why it was important to keep the country together. After that, Abraham Lincoln stood up and spoke for two minutes and sat down. The preacher afterwards said that Lincoln had accomplished more in those two minutes than the preacher had accomplished in two hours.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It wasn't a preacher.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: All right. Fine, I don't know my history exactly. The member across the aisle is trying to remind me that it was a speaker who was invited. I don't know my American history to the last detail, but the bottom line is that everybody knows that the Gettysburg address only took two minutes.

The minister has managed to bring forward and speak about some very important changes that are occurring here. We could talk for hours about this, but at least we talk about it. This government talks about it, and this government sends these things to committee, unlike the previous government, where committee meetings and the majority of bills were time-allocated. There wasn't time to speak on bills. Here, we allow time to speak and allow debate. The member across can get up and speak himself if he wants to. He can speak about this in committee as well, and he's allowed to speak to it on third reading.

When I watched this Legislature—I wasn't a member back in the Mike Harris days—I don't recall too much debate going on during third reading; maybe someone can correct me. But we have debate on third reading and in committee, and we hear from deputations there. There's ample opportunity to hear and speak on those items. The minister decided to pick on various sections that affect her ministry and spoke well on them. I congratulate her for doing so, and I wish others would stand up and do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I was pleased to see the minister speak on her particular section of Bill 212. I had a little bit of time this morning and this afternoon to go over it, and I want to specifically raise something the minister did not talk much about.

Section 3, on the Family Responsibility and Support Arrears Enforcement Act, says, "The act is amended to allow the director to establish policies and procedures that must be considered in the exercise of the director's powers and duties relating to enforcement in section 6 and in the exercise," and here's the important part, "of the director's discretion to refuse to enforce a support order or support deduction order in section 7."

I have a lot of concerns with that, and I would like the minister to explain why we are giving discretion to the director of FRO to refuse to enforce a support order. Of course, support orders are put in through our court system. We have a court order system now where you have to go to court and plead your case, and a judge decides the value of money that needs to be given to

make that family survive, and yet now with the proposal in Bill 212, we are saying the director's discretion at FRO "to refuse to enforce a support order." I would really like the minister to take her two minutes to explain—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Member from Etobicoke North, member from Timmins-James Bay—

Ms. Sylvia Jones: —to justify why we would override a current court system and a current court order that is in place, because we're essentially saying judges would—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute. I'm having trouble hearing the member speak. I would just point to the member from Etobicoke North and the member from Timmins-James Bay to let the member from Dufferin-Caledon have her full two minutes.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I'd like the minister to take her two minutes to explain why we are overriding in legislation what the judges have put in place in our court system. I think it would be a very unfortunate waste of our current court system to say the director can overrule what the courts and judges are placing—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments? The member from Eglinton-Lawrence—sorry. The member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My, my, Madam Speaker, I am just absolutely—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Eglinton-Lawrence was up first, but due to rotation, I will acknowledge the member from Timmins-James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Thank you very much, Madam Speaker.

I want to, first of all, clarify for the record for my good friend across the way: It turns out that little dispute that we were having about who gave that speech—I was saying it was a senator; he was saying it was a minister of the cloth. Turns out we were both right. It was Senator Everett from Massachusetts, who was also a minister, so I guess we were both right. Anyways, the point was well made. I wouldn't want to be accused of being unfair, and when you call a spade a spade and it's a diamond, you better say it was a diamond. So there we go.

I just want to say to the government—we'll have a chance to speak to this bill a little bit more fully later—that the problem with these types of bills is that you bring in omnibus bills that change a whole raft of legislation, some of which is good. I've seen some in this legislation, some of the stuff that you're wanting to change, that I would support. But there are certainly parts of that legislation that leave a little bit to be desired when it comes to the ability to appeal to the OMB, how far you're not going when it comes to changes of the Municipal Act—there's a debate there: Should we go further? It's probably a step in the right direction, but certainly there are some changes to be made.

It leads to us this problem: How do we do the right thing when it comes to the legislation so that we make a product at the end that is acceptable to all and that serves Ontario citizens well? I have a problem that we're going to get into a piece of legislation where there's going to be particular parts to it that I'm going to have a hard time trying to support, and I'm sure other members of the opposition will as well. The government's going to stand there and say, "Look at that. They're being oppositional. They don't want to support municipal election reform." Of course I support municipal election reform, but when you have a bill and you add into the bill a whole bunch of other things other than municipal election reform—OMB reform and a whole bunch of other things; there are even changes to how we deal with elk under the MNR—it is very hard to pass it as a package. It's a bit sad that the government doesn't find a way sometimes to take out those pieces of the legislation that we find offensive so that we can go back—you'll still get your bill in the end, but that we have an opportunity to give it good public scrutiny.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The Minister of Community and Social Services has up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I would like to thank the members from Durham, Scarborough Southwest, Dufferin-Caledon and Timmins-James Bay for their comments.

I'm not going to comment on the comment from the member from Durham about the length of my intervention. I think that quality over the length of the speech is often appreciated. But I am going to comment on the adoption act, the amendment to that act that we just passed not that long ago. How wonderful the comments are that I get from the people who have found either their birth parents or their children that they gave up for adoption. We are overwhelmed with the requests for information, and I'm very pleased to say that this amendment was long overdue. We had a lot of happy Ontarians and Canadians after we amended this act.

As for the comments from the member from Dufferin-Caledon about the Family Responsibility Office—

Interjection.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: When we came into power, there was a lot of improvement.
1620

Mr. Mike Colle: There was a mess. It was a disaster—

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, the member said that it was a mess. It was a mess, and thanks to my colleague Minister Papatello, who did a lot of good work when she was there, the Family Responsibility Office, we have asked the office to bring change that will help this function to allow—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I'd like to start with simple clarification. Why are they doing this? When I look at this bill—I've been here about 15 years, and I would

challenge anyone, and this is not a confrontational challenge—it's almost impossible to read a bill without also having a compendium with the bill it's actually amending. When you change the language, you change the intent, and I don't think that, retroactively, you should be able to change legislation by amending it. You should not be able to change the intent of the legislation by changing certain sections or subsections, because that bill would have gone through consultation, regardless of the political affiliation, and that's the problem here.

We all could be criticized for trying to houseclean, as was said by one minister, but there are two completely new bills buried in this legislation. If you look at the preamble—and for those at home, without being too strident about this, there's usually a purpose clause which defines what the intent of the bill is. This may have been developed through a policy conference; from the suggestion of a constituent; stakeholders, be it doctors, teachers, other professionals—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Or lobbyists.

Mr. John O'Toole: Indeed, lobbyists.

When I look at it, it says here, "The bill amends or repeals a number of acts and enacts two new acts. For convenience, the amendments, repeals and new acts are set out in separate schedules. Schedules with the names of ministries include amendments to and repeals of acts that are administered by the ministry involved or that affect that ministry. The commencement provisions for each of the schedules are set out" below. If you read just that section alone, it is fairly comprehensive and not a casual read.

We as members, on all sides of the House, really did not get copies of this for any great, thorough review. In fact, there is no caucus here—and I would put to you, including the government—which has actually caucused this bill, because it was introduced Wednesday last week, and most caucuses are held on Tuesday. Tomorrow, being Tuesday, is the first Tuesday after the bill was introduced.

We know that the government members, with all due respect, will be voting yes, like this. They'll be like the three monkeys, actually. There's more than three of them, but they will be voting the way Premier McGuinty tells them, period.

Here's our problem: There will be, no doubt, some good and valuable sections within the legislation. Often governments bury in those things that we all, in common, want, but then there's the poison pill argument. They often do this—Madam Speaker, you would know this—in the budget.

When I look at this, and I look at some of it in detail, there's a section that I have, under my critic file, some responsibility for. Over the weekend, through the Internet and other sources, I was able to actually provide for our caucus meeting tomorrow—each of our critics are required to inform the caucus group of what our concerns are. My concern is what isn't obvious. That's when you get into it. Why are they doing—what are they—

Mr. Robert Bailey: Why?

Mr. John O'Toole: My good friend from Sarnia-Lambton said to me, "Why are they doing this?" In all genuine sincerity, why didn't they break this big, huge cookie into several little cookies and let us chew on them for a while?

They said they had public consultations. With whom?

Actually, what they've done here is they're trying to change the channel from a \$25-billion deficit. They're trying to change the channel from a minister's resignation and more to follow. They're trying to change the channel from million-dollar consultants to \$1 billion wasted in eHealth. There are serious troubles going on. What this bill is, respectfully, is about changing the channel. This bill is like cobbling together a bunch of phraseology changes, which they tell me is some of what it's about.

I read earlier one little section because my section is section 17; that's the Ministry of Government Services. Now, it sort of sounds innocuous enough: government services. ServiceOntario—they closed a whole bunch of driver licence issuing offices, putting a whole bunch of small business people out of work, and now they're going to have ServiceOntario, a fancy new government-run expensive model, Monday to Friday, and if you can't get from there 8 to 4, you're out of luck. It's like the H1N1 vaccine. Everybody's working during the week. Well, not in Ontario; most people are laid off. But those who are working can't get there during the business day. So when do they have this? They have it at some arcane hour or location that no one can get to.

They talk about public transit, for instance.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Can't get there from here.

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Sarnia-Lambton has very good quips; I must compliment him. You can't get there from here. In fact, this bill does not get us anywhere in a hurry.

I was forced to intercede this afternoon, and because of the timing—I won't go into any extra detail. I would have liked more time to prepare; we'll say that. My prepared notes are rather scant, if you will.

My friend from Sarnia-Lambton asked, "Why are they doing this?" I really do think the Attorney General is a very decent, intelligent, capable fellow. In fact, I think he's the heir apparent for Premier Dalton McGuinty. I would say the member from London and some other jurisdiction down there has a lot to offer. But I would say that if he was to do the honourable thing here today, he would just say, "Look, we're going to take a deep breath here."

I know his parliamentary assistant, the member from Willowdale, to be a good friend. Last week, I enjoyed some off-business time with him and some of his colleagues. In that respect, they're honourable gentlemen. I would say that they're honourable gentlemen. But the real purpose here—why are they doing it? All members, both sides, all sides, should be asking, "What's the purpose here?"

I said section 17 is mine. I should get to it in the limited time—in fact, they've limited the time I can speak on this bill.

Mr. Robert Bailey: Yes, it's unfair.

Mr. John O'Toole: I should have unlimited time. I would suggest somebody should move for unanimous consent that I can speak for as long as it takes.

Prior to getting to section 17, I had to read section 16. I thought I'd just read the concluding page. There's one act here; it's quite good. Madam Speaker, you'd enjoy this as an intelligent preacher in your own right—minister, if you will, in your own right. You're already a minister; why would you want to be in government?

Section 11 in schedule 16 says this, "Section 18 of the Perpetuities Act is amended by adding the following subsection:

"Rules not applicable to certain trust funds"—listen up. I'm begging, urging the members on the government side to listen. Please. What is it that you're opposed to listening to here?

It says, "The rules of law and statutory enactments relating to perpetuities do not apply and are deemed never to have applied to a trust fund required by subsection 9(1) of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act (Canada)."

It would sound like the original bill, which I haven't read, that it's amending—the Perpetuities Act is what it's amending. I would have to have that compendium with me to know the intent of that.

1630

What it means here is this: Nuclear waste in this particular reference would last thousands of years; the radioactive life of nuclear waste is thousands of years, maybe hundreds of thousands of years—radioactive life, okay? The duty to protect nuclear waste is in perpetuity—I'm thinking that's what it meant. Now they're saying it's "deemed never to have applied." There it is, if we can zoom the camera in here. That's the section. It's about four lines long. That section has a profound implication for my riding and for Wesleyville, where they stored the low-level nuclear waste. They've been fighting about moving that waste for 40 or 50 years. The federal government has responsibility in this area as well. They have spent literally \$50 million and haven't relocated one teaspoon of low-level nuclear waste.

Right now, we're talking about the nuclear waste thing. Did you know that there really is no solution for handling it? They have a report out—it's a federal report—and it says that there's the short-term solution, which means stabilize it where it is; the medium-term solution, which is, "We'll have a look at it"; and the long-term solution is, "We're working on it." Seriously. It's a huge report like that. I had a look through it and had a little conversation with people who knew more about it than I did.

The big plan there, as you would all know, is to drill a great big hole into the Precambrian Shield, the Laurentian Mountains, drill it through the rock thousands of feet down—this is impermeable rock. That's why they're choosing that. It's like the tunnel they're building, the Beck tunnel, costing billions of dollars, and it will never be finished. I put to you it will collapse before it's done.

That's only one little section. Can you imagine 400 pages of this drivel? It is just unconscionable that they would be trying to shuffle this by to change the channel. That's all they're doing. Viewers, be prepared: This is another sham by them, I'm telling you.

In my section here—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: Some of the members on the other side—I don't want to name them—are saying I'm wrong. Well, stand in your place in the two minutes and demonstrate to me that you, first of all, have even read it, because I put to you, you cannot read this bill in isolation. You have to have a stack of 22 pieces of legislation to examine what is changing. If you're changing it from "thou shalt not" or "thou shall not do it" or "maybe you can do it" or "will do it" or "shall do it"—these are all words. I put to you without being challenging, you certainly have to look at it.

In the few seconds that I've been given in the overall compass of time here, the Business Corporations Act—

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: This is the Business Corporations Act. This is just coming out of Small Business Month. "Paragraphs 22 and 28 and section 272 of the Business Corporations Act are repealed." What does that section say? You cannot know what it says unless you have the bill with you. The next is, "Clause 273(1)(a) of the act is amended by striking out 'an incorporator' and substituting 'all incorporators'." I think I have established conclusively that you cannot read this bill, 400 pages, without a whole stack of bills with you.

I go back to my original premise: Why are they doing this? What's the purpose in having a choking omnibus bill loaded with all sorts of intents and no description of what they're intending to do, really, even in the small section I stumbled on?

I'm going to mention a couple of sections here. "The Certificate of Titles Act is repealed." This has to do with property registrations, I am imagining, because you have to look at the Certificate of Titles Act. "Ontario regulation 514/93"—that's a regulation that was passed in 1993 under the Bob Rae government—"made under the act is revoked." What did that regulation say? Does anyone know? There isn't a soul in this House who knows, not one, not the minister, I'm telling you. Don't try to slip it by us here. This is a big bill, and don't expect it to be swallowed as comfortably as the Liberal members—they'll all vote yes because they won't even have a clue what's going on.

The Certification of Titles Act is repealed, as I said. Here's another one, the Change of Name Act: "The following provisions of the Change of Name Act are amended by striking out 'Ministry of the Solicitor General' wherever that expression appears and substituting in each case 'Ministry of Community Safety and Correctional Services.'" Yes, that's an administrative change. Yes, I get it; they're just changing the ministry reference.

Would business go on as usual without this? Of course it would. They've changed ministry names. They've got

a new Ministry of Revenue whose primary job, with staff, is to sell the HST. He's not the Minister of Revenue; he's the minister of communication. He's out there preaching to every Rotary Club and service club that will even listen to him, and I heard that attendance is down, that attendance is way down. In fact, we'll see the real attendance at election day in 2011.

However, I'll go on here and say there are a bunch of sections under that that are changed—and there's no one here.

Here's another interesting one. The member from Willowdale would like this because he did practise law at one time, I'm sure. He had to write the bar exam, so he must have practised, at least. Here it is, the Condominium Act, 1998. I had the privilege to be the parliamentary assistant when this bill, under Jim Flaherty, was initially passed. I did meet with the condominium associations, the condominium owners and the groups as well. This is a disclosure legislation. There are two parties to the contract: There's the condominium corporation and there's the condominium owners. The condominium corporation makes a disclosure to the person who's purchasing the property, being the condominium owner.

Here it is: "The Condominium Act"—it says—"is amended by adding 'as that Act read immediately before subsection 2(1) of Schedule 17 to the Good Government Act, 2009 came into force' after 'the Certification of Titles Act.'" So I gather this is about the registration. The property titles act is titles registration. I still say that I'm not sure, after reading what's here as well as the preamble, what, in fact, it's doing, and I leave it for the two-minute hits that are going to be forthcoming, I hope.

There's a section here, the Land Titles Act, a very big deal. You start tinkering with property rights, and you have an issue. I want a full disclosure of what you mean. It's talking about notice of hearings. These are dispute resolution mechanisms, primarily.

"Section 19 of the act is repealed and the following substituted:

"Examination of witnesses."

So I think we've established conclusively that my argument stands. It probably stands for the day and will rule the day because you can't possibly read this act, not with bad intent or malicious intent, but without reading the parent act that it's intended to change. By law, you cannot change the intent of the original legislation by an amendment, the initial legislation on the titles act or whatever act it is.

There's a section here on the Marriage Act for instance, what they call marriage practitioners, that's repealing a bill that's already passed but not proclaimed. I am so disappointed. I say, why are they doing this? We should leave here today, when they're trying to rush this bill through—last Wednesday; it's not been caucused; it's so big you'd have to have a truck go round with you with all the paper that it's amending, and then you couldn't read it. We have, in our caucus, some very qualified people who have practised law, practised engineering, been ministers of the crown, and would know.

I'm waiting for the member from Carleton-Mississippi Mills, because he's the dean who is highly regarded here, and he's been the minister over most of these ministries and probably could shed some light on this. It would be a compliment if he stood—I'm not ordering him to but I'm sort of hoping he will. I'm hoping that he'll get up and validate some of the observations I've made.

Failing that, I've said, in the limited time—I could seek unanimous consent right now that I can continue to speak for a considerable length of time. I seek unanimous consent, Madam Speaker.

1640

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has sought unanimous consent to continue speaking. Is it the pleasure of the House that he do so?

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I don't hear a warrant for that. Thank you. You still have 26 seconds left, though.

Mr. John O'Toole: The Minister of Community and Social Services has confronted me by saying, no, I'm not entitled to my time to debate a 400-page bill—and others as well. In fact, I think she's the whip today. I think she's acting as the whip and she's whipping them all into order. They're going to shut me down, and it's a shame. It's a shame. An omnibus bill and they won't allow me to vocalize some of the concerns that my constituents—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. Paul Miller: I'd like to thank the member from Durham for his point of view.

I'll tell you, Madam Speaker, since I've been here at Queen's Park, I see the government constantly standing up, especially the Minister of Finance, and saying, "You voted against this; you voted against the budget." Well, what they don't tell you is that they don't break down the budget to vote on each amendment or each part of the budget. What you do is you either accept the whole budget or you don't. Really, the public should know, when they stand up and say, "Your party voted against the budget," that we did not vote against the entire budget. There's lots of things in that budget that we like.

How does that pertain to this? It pertains to this the same way. If you're not given the information, if you don't have time to digest what's going on in the bill—they hand it to you a week before and take you through it without any consultation, without any input, and they expect you to ram it through again. On committee, they have five members, with two Conservatives and one NDP, and they shove things through once again. The public should know that really the opposition has good amendments, good ideas, and they fall on deaf ears. They just follow their marching orders and push it through, the same as a budget. I'm so sick and tired of people standing up in this House and saying, "Your party voted against the budget." Naturally there are things in that budget we didn't like and didn't want. "You voted against the budget." We're going to accept things we

don't think are right for the people of Ontario? But you either accept everything in the budget or none of it. So obviously we have to go with none of it because we don't like much of it.

That's what the people of this province never understand. They say, "Well, why would they vote against that?" Because there are 50 things in it that we didn't like. It's unbelievable that the general public really doesn't have the opportunity to understand what goes on in here.

My biggest frustration is at committee, when sometimes we don't even get to address it, and when we do, it doesn't even get read and it falls on deaf ears. They may take one amendment every six months just to say they did something. But we have a lot of good ideas on this side of the House, a lot of good stuff to put in, and we never get the opportunity because they just follow marching orders; they just do as they're told. Even if they think our idea is good, even if they agree with us, they don't dare stand up and vote against the Premier.

It's absolutely unacceptable, and the people of Ontario should know what really goes on in here.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. David Zimmer: I have to say it's getting late in the afternoon and, for recreational purposes, I certainly enjoyed Mr. O'Toole's comments. They were entertaining; they were playful; they were colourful; they were rambling. They were also erratic and made no constitutional, legislative, statutory sense at all.

I jotted down a comment that Mr. O'Toole made as he got carried away with his piece of entertainment this afternoon. Here's what Mr. O'Toole said. Now, this comes from, as he reminds me from time to time, an experienced legislator who has served as parliamentary assistant to a number of distinguished parliamentarians, albeit in his party. He said at some point in his remarks—and this is his constitutional position, so law professors and the media and political scientists are going to be, I expect, right now in a state of complete shock. This is what the member said, and this is after years of experience here. His position is, you should not be able to change legislation by amending it.

I ask members, does that make any sense at all? Legislation comes before this body in two ways: It's introduced as a bill and eventually becomes an act, or there is a bill that eventually becomes an act to amend a piece of legislation. The statement, "You should not be able to change legislation by amending it," is bizarre. It's also playful and entertaining, but I think it's bizarre more than anything else.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: I'm going to say about my friend from Willowdale that he may be a little disingenuous—a word he uses quite often in this place—with regard to my friend from Durham.

My friend from Durham, when he was making those comments, was talking about making amendments in an

omnibus bill that is some 600 pages long, which change the original intent of the legislation that was debated in this Legislature. That is the great concern of our caucus. We have a number of amendments in here that are not housekeeping. In fact, I just came across one about the Niagara Escarpment Planning and Development Act while I was listening to my disingenuous friend. This change to this act, according to my notes, permits the addition of lands to the Niagara Escarpment planning area by regulation, by the cabinet, without talking about what kind of process you would go through.

My friend from Orangeville represents an area that includes much of the Niagara Escarpment and would know that if you include a person's land in the planning area—I had a great deal of experience with this, as I brought forward the first plan by the Davis government—you restrict his or her rights significantly. And you give the cabinet this carte blanche without any kind of process required before they do it?

This bill has some very strong sections in it, and this is not the way to change legislation in the province of Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear what the member from Durham is saying in the sense that it's a huge bill and there is a lot to be said about this particular bill, and it's fairly difficult to try to say what you have to say within a 20-minute period. I have the same concerns as him. I think it's too bad that the process does not lend itself well to what we're trying to do. I'm sure that there are parts of this bill that he would support, as there are parts of this bill that I would support. But here is the problem: How do you vote for a bill that has things in it—it could be a third or a half—that are not supportable from our particular positions and perspectives?

You need to have a process that allows us to separate out those things that are more contentious and allow those things we have agreement on to move forward, and then spend a little bit of time on those things where there is no agreement so we can try to find some consensus. At the end of that, I'll say to the government, "The government has a majority; it can do what it has to do."

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from Durham has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. John O'Toole: I do want to thank the member from Hamilton East—Stoney Creek—I took his reference to the difficulty with these omnibus bills, with the poison-pill function within them—and the always disingenuous member from Willowdale, as he has been described very eloquently by the member from Carleton—Mississippi Mills, the longest-serving member here. He has actually been the minister on some of these bills that are being amended, so more could be said. In fact, I expect he will probably be speaking on this bill at some length in the next few days.

The member from Timmins—James Bay, who is also an experienced member here, would know that it's very difficult to reach consensus on all parts of even a small

bill, let alone an omnibus bill. The foregone conclusion here is that we cannot support the question: Why are they doing it this way; what's in here that we aren't being told about?

Even if you go to a briefing, you have to know what questions to ask to get answers. With respect to what I said that the member from Willowdale commented on, what I said was that you cannot change the intent of legislation by a simple amendment. If the bill is to allow property rights or entitlements and you're amending it with a slight amendment that says that no longer applies, that simply is not how it happens. You can actually rescind the bill, which they've done—under the Family Law Act, they have rescinded a bill. They've actually, in law, cancelled that legislation. That's appropriate, to do it that way. But to change entitlements under the bill by a simple amendment, I would say that's not appropriate.

1650

Again, there are good portions of amendments within this bill, and I did outline a couple of them, but for the most part I'll wait for further debate on this bill—

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Thank you. Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to stand up in my place and speak in support of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain acts and by enacting two new acts. I listened to many different speakers who spoke before me from both sides of the House talking about the importance of transforming many different acts and many different ministries to create some kind of accessibility for the people of Ontario to be governed by a good government, to give them some kind of access to many different rules and regulations and to learn about our government and to have access to the government without any problems, without any hesitation.

I listened to the member from Durham, who spoke for about 20 minutes a few minutes ago about the bill. All of his concentration was on how the bill's too thick and too big and nobody read it. That's what he focused on. He never mentioned the content of the bill and why we're bringing this bill to the people of Ontario and why we're bringing this bill before us in this Legislature to be passed and to be discussed and to be debated.

I was listening to my colleague the member from Scarborough Southwest, and he was mentioning the importance of this bill and why the Good Government Act should be implemented to create accessibility and understanding and clean it up in a format that people can understand and be able to use. Also, he talked about modern history and the modern time we're living in. Technology is speeding up like crazy, by the day, by the minute, by the second.

I remember that not a long time ago, we used to have a telephone. It was huge. It was a big phone. You were able to dial all sorts of numbers. You had to boost it every half an hour. Now we've advanced through technology. We have a BlackBerry, which has the format of a small computer. We can navigate the system, and we can

know what's going on around the globe within a second, from any corner of this globe. This is part of technology. We can also store all the information in that small machine.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I will caution the member not to use that as a prop in the House. Thank you.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: It was not a prop; I was giving an example of technology and the advantages of technology. That's what we're talking about.

Also, you can store information on small chips. You don't need papers to be put on the shelf. To have access to those papers and records, you can push a button or a code, and you can go into those records in detail.

That's why we try to revisit those bills and acts from time to time: to create some kind of accessibility, to clean them up and keep them up to date with modern technology, modern issues and modern life.

Also, when I was reading the briefing on this bill and discussing it with my colleagues and my friends and with the Attorney General, who introduced this bill, you know what I discovered? We're not the only government throughout the history of this place to introduce a big, thick bill that created or handled a lot of amendments.

I know that we're doing 600 amendments. Before that, with Bill 190, the Good Government Act of 2006, we did 550 amendments. Also, the Government Efficiency Act was done by the PC Party. It had 713 amendments with 268 pages. The NDP also did one, a bill that had 756 amendments in 1994.

I know it's not just the Liberal Party of Ontario, not this current government, doing this to create some kind of a problem. The people know that every government, when they take office and discover and review all the bills and all the acts, feels over a period of time that they should change the acts to keep up with technology, with modern issues, with life. As you know, life changes from time to time. Circumstances change from time to time.

The most important thing—I listened to many speakers who spoke before me talk about two important things.

The Municipal Act: We gave it a lot of good deals. I remember when we got elected in 2003, in that period of time—we put a fixed time for elections for the Municipal Act, because back then it was every two years, and before that it was every year. We wanted to give municipalities the chance to propose laws and changes and be able to see the changes in their one mandate, which we thought—four years—is important enough and good enough to give them the chance to implement what they think is good for the municipalities.

Besides that, as a result of the elections, we have learned from many different experiences. As we go, with technology progressing, we are trying to implement new changes, especially for the Municipal Act; for instance, to simplify the elections calendar, to make it easier for the people to go and vote.

The accuracy of information on voting lists—to allow the people to access those lists. Also, the candidates use

these lists in a professional manner, to allow them to send their message and ideas to their constituents and have the chance to be voted for. Many people mentioned that it's good stuff, because now, according to the circumstance at the present time—in the past, if you didn't have a lot of money, you couldn't run for office because it required a lot of financial expense. You could not do it because you didn't have the money, because it takes a lot of effort, takes a lot of resources. That's why the incumbent in municipal-level politics sits there forever. It would be difficult for the newcomer to politics to vote out the person who has been sitting there, because they have the advantage of the power or access to media, access to records, access to many different things, their friends etc.

Also, we learned from the last elections about accessibility to those polling stations, and the Minister of Community and Social Services outlined the importance of allowing people with disabilities to participate in elections, to be able to vote and to be voted for. By creating accessible polling stations, by creating ways and avenues for the people living with disabilities to be able to participate in our daily life—because as we know, all of us know, people with disabilities have the chance and the ability and the intellectual capacity like every one of us to be able to vote and also to be voted for. This is a part of our transformation of those laws.

I talk a lot also about transparency, the voting process and about the campaign, the cost of the campaign, the finances of the campaign, and how we can enforce some clarity to those finances and make sure all people are using the laws which already exist in a professional manner and give everyone a chance to compete on the same level, with the same ability and the same opportunity, because we want to have new blood come to politics, want to have new blood participate in politics, and let the people who have a lot of ideas participate without worrying about financing, without worrying about popularity. As I mentioned, it's important stuff.

Besides that, everybody talks about MPAC. MPAC is the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. As you know, everyone complains about it because they don't have some kind of understanding of what's going on. This is a very complex issue. I know many governments came to this place and many parties with many ideologies, many different directions. Every one of them came and tried to fix this issue and failed, to date, to reform and transform this issue.

We talk about tribunals, how we can make sure that tribunals are accessible and also fair to all the people. That's what this bill concentrates on, as a good government bill, in order to allow people to have a chance to eliminate lots of bureaucracy which exists behind many different issues. In this compendium act, it's a process that every tribunal be required to develop a public accountability document, and I think it's a very important step.

Regulation or directive to the Management Board of Cabinet—all these elements, I think, give us the chance

to have a good government and the goal of increasing transparency and accountability.

1700

The act would also regulate the tribunal appointment process. Members would be selected by a competitive process, applying criteria established in the act and any qualifications required by any other act.

All these transformations we are trying to create in order to have good government, to have a good accessibility mechanism in many different acts, and all the ministers from different ministries will work together in order to create access to the government system and allow the people to participate, allow the people to understand in a simple way.

We don't describe this bill by the thickness or by the number of amendments; we describe it by the intent of the bill, which means to have good government by allowing people to have access to information and to believe in the government, and also to have rules and regulations that people can utilize without any troubles.

Madam Speaker, thank you for allowing me to stand up in my place and speak in support. Hopefully, the other members will understand the importance of this bill and come forward and support us in order to create good government and good legislation in order to allow people to participate widely and without any hesitation in the government process.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Ms. Sylvia Jones: I am pleased to stand and respond to the member from London—Fanshawe. When he finishes his dissertation with a comment on good government, I must question why, then, in Bill 212, there is no longer going to be the ability for Ontario residents to petition the Lieutenant Governor in Council to review any order or direction of the Minister of Health, any order of the Minister of Natural Resources, any Ontario Energy Board decision, any Ontario Municipal Board decision and any Environmental Review Tribunal decision. Most disturbing, even then, they aren't allowed to appeal to the Lieutenant Governor in Council.

The bill is written in such a way that any outstanding appeals or petitions would retroactively be struck. When we talk about good governance, I don't believe there is a single Ontario resident who believes that they get better governance and more transparent government when they aren't allowed to appeal decisions made by the Ministry of Health, natural resources, the Ontario Energy Board, the Ontario Municipal Board or the Environmental Review Tribunal.

Instead of talking in platitudes about good government, about what Bill 212 is supposed to be about, how about you actually explain to the residents of Ontario why they are no longer going to appeal those decisions? Because I personally think that's what they'd like to know about, and why you're putting that in Bill 212.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I hear partly what the member from London—Fanshawe across the way is saying. We were just having a chat here in the opposition with the Conservatives, and we agree that there are some things in this bill that, quite frankly, we can support, but there are some real big questions as to what some of this bill is all about.

First of all, the government introduced this bill, and has it here for debate on the Monday. Our research staff are still going through the omnibus bill; it's about this thick, so people have got to read the various sections in order to clearly understand what's in the bill. Because we've learned over the years that with omnibus bills, you've got to be careful, because that's normally when things slip through that you may not be aware of, so you really have to take time to look at this in some detail.

We're saying to you: Listen, there are probably some things in here we can support, and maybe we can come to an agreement about expediting those things that we support, but there are things in here, like the member from Durham was saying, in regard to nuclear waste—I don't pretend to understand what that section says, but he seems to have some concerns about it, and I haven't had a chance to read that section of bill. How do I, as a legislator, make an informed decision unless I've got proper time to look at the bill and, number two, to deal with those things that we agree on and take those other things and allow the public to have their say?

So I say, across the way, we're not trying to be deleterious here. All we're trying to do is have a bit of time to be able to look at this bill and give it justice.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I just wanted to comment again about the Family Responsibility Office. You know, these good people working in the Family Responsibility Office see things that are in the act or in the procedure that are not efficient and are not conducive to providing good service to people who need the services. And if it's not contentious, these changes are in the Good Government Act.

Just as an example, if one of the children dies, the enforcement staff of the Family Responsibility Office will remove the requirement of the payer to pay for the child, because they have all the information in front of them, instead of going back to court, frustrating everybody and it's very costly for the payer.

What I have asked of the Family Responsibility Office is to bring changes that are agreeable, that are not contentious and that will improve the efficiency of the Family Responsibility Office. It's frustrating for those we're trying to serve and frustrating for the staff who are working there and want to do a good job.

There is nothing in what we have introduced in my ministry that is contentious. I'm very pleased that we are able, once a year, to bring about these changes for the best of everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Questions and comments?

Mr. Norman W. Sterling: With regard to the last speaker's comments with regard to the Family Responsibility Office, the public accounts committee reviewed that office a couple of years ago. I would have welcomed a debate on a major overhaul of their function and what they're doing, because they haven't been functioning very well for the last 15 or 20 years, quite frankly, and I don't think one change is going to remedy the problem.

Notwithstanding that, another part of the act on which I would like a direct answer, in a political sense, would be that under a number of divisions of the consumer services act, they're taking away the director's responsibility for the registrar of the Collection Agencies Act and the registrar of the Consumer Reporting Act, the registrar of the Film Classification Act, the registrar of the Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act, and the director's responsibility for the registrars of the motor vehicles act, the Payday Loans Act, the Real Estate and Business Brokers Act and the Travel Industry Act. They're decoupling the director's responsibility and supervision of the registrar.

I'm very reluctant to give away carte blanche to anyone in our system, and I think there still should be some political accountability. However, I know this government's penchant for trying to get rid of responsibility. Hive it off to the LHINs, and you don't have any responsibility anymore; hive it off to eHealth, and you don't have any responsibility any more.

I think that a lot of this bill requires a lot of answers and explanations as to why they're making changes, and we're not getting that. We're getting surprised with a lot of changes that simply don't seem to make sense.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): The member from London—Fanshawe has up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I thank all the people who commented on my speech.

I want to say that it's important to all the members from both sides of the House to understand this bill. That's why the debate is wide open and everyone has a right to participate and give his or her opinions and comments on this bill.

I know the member opposite mentioned the petition to cabinet. I want to say that for the last 15 years, really, anyone could write a petition to the cabinet.

Sometimes there are many different rules and regulations in place and nobody uses them. That's why this bill came: to clean up a lot of acts and sections that haven't been used for many, many years.

I would say that the majority of this bill is house-keeping. It changes terminology to be updated with modern life and also changes many rules and regulations that are no longer related to the present time. That's why this bill came: to update the system, update many different ministries and update regulations that were in existence for many, many years for some reason, and that reason does not exist.

That's why the debate is wide open. The member from the third party mentioned that he was in discussion with

the Conservatives and might support part of it. I welcome his comments. We welcome his comments always. We open this place for debate and open the committee for debate and suggestions. I'm looking forward to seeing more debate to understand it even better myself, because you know what? This is the democratic way. When the opposition members get up, propose, reject and explain why, I guess we in the government learn. Myself, I learn a lot when a member from the opposition stands up in his place or her place and tells me why he or she is opposing such a bill or a section of the bill.

You're welcome to debate because it's part of the democratic process. Thank you again to the people who spoke on this—

1710

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Further debate.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I was looking forward to having this opportunity, and I appreciate the Conservatives helping me out in this.

I've been saying this in the comments that I've made so far on the two-minute hits on this particular legislation. I just want to say up front that there are things in this bill that we probably can support. There are things in here that, in the end, probably make some sense and things that I think the opposition parties and the general public can support. But does it mean that everything inside this omnibus bill, which is about this thick, is things that the public and the opposition will be able to support in its entirety? The answer is no.

In what I've read of the bill so far, there are sections in that bill that, quite frankly, I have some problems with. Some of it I support. For example, you're making changes to the Municipal Act, which I can support. Does it go far enough? It's probably not as far as I want to go on municipal expenses, but it is going in the right direction. I understand the timeliness of needing to be able to do this, and we certainly don't want to slow that down. We understand that that's important.

But there are other sections of the bill that are, quite frankly, problematic. We're going to restrict the ability of the public to appeal certain cases before the Ontario Municipal Board? Is that something that's desirable? I can understand why you're doing that from the perspective of developers, but I can tell you from the perspective of homeowners and people who may be concerned about some process of planning or zoning that's going on in their municipality, there are going to be all kinds of people who are going to have a problem with not being able to go to the Ontario Municipal Board in certain cases. Is that something this Legislature should be doing?

Since I've been here in 1990, we have constantly, under the Conservative government and now under you, limited the ability of people to get before the OMB because a lot of people see the OMB as a bit of a hindrance to development. Let's say that you buy that argument, because I know certain people do. Does that mean to say you throw the baby out with the bathwater?

Does it mean to say you extinguish the rights of an individual to go before the Ontario Municipal Board in order to have better government, have better development, take the roadblocks out and let those developments go forward? Well, there are reasons why people go before the OMB. I think the OMB is sophisticated enough to understand that either it is yes or it is no when it comes to the issue of being able to accept a case as having merit or not having merit.

So I say to my friends across the way, what we would like to do is have a situation where we are able to pass those sections of the bill that we can have some understanding and agreement on, and on those parts of the bill where we don't have agreement, we're able to move that over and not deal with that in this session, but wait until we send to it committee in the intersession.

I say to the government across the way, you're treading a really fine line here. We in the opposition, both the Conservatives and New Democrats, have been fairly good when it comes to trying to work with the government and be able to acquiesce to trying to pass legislation through this House in a way that is conducive to your agenda, as far as timing.

But listen, I'm not going to get in a fight on a whole bunch of other things you're doing. I'm not happy about your HST, I'm not happy on your forestry policy, but that's not the debate here. The debate is, should a government be passing a huge omnibus bill that I would venture to guess, never mind the opposition, members of the government have not had an opportunity to read in some detail?

Interjection: Name names.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Listen, I'll name names: Gilles Bisson. I've not read the entire bill. I started on the weekend reading through that bill, and I would challenge anybody in this House to come and have a debate with me on the sections of the bill, because I'll bet you we would not be able to defend—any of us—all of the details in that bill because we have not had the proper time to debate this bill—not debate. I'm not even talking debate; I just mean to read the bill.

We said to the House leader last week, "Listen, don't call this bill on Monday. You just introduced the bill. It's this thick. We need to give it to our research staff." We had our researchers in here on Saturday and Sunday going through the bill in order to give it some critical analysis along with our critics—not that I oppose having to work on weekends. Listen, I come out of the mining sector. I used to work 12-hour shifts—I used to work graveyard, I used to work weekends, I used to work seven-day swings, and on top of that, I did call-outs and overtime. So it's not the work. But in the time that we've had, we've not been able, quite frankly, to give the kind of analysis that we need to for this bill.

I'll tell you what's dangerous here. My good friend Mr. Prue was here when the Tories were in government—and this is not a swing at the Tories, because every government has done it. Omnibus bills were brought to this House, to the point where the government

even had to admit at the end when they passed it that there were problems in the bill, and they had to come back and undo some of the damage they had done in the bill. The bureaucrats who draft the bill do the best job they can—they work hard, they're excellent at what they do—but sometimes they don't get it right. We were saying to the government of the day, "Don't go there. Take your time. Make sure that we look at this in some detail."

To give the Liberals some credit, in their first term, when the government was first elected, they had a similar omnibus bill and they gave us how long, Mr. Prue? You were the critic for that bill. We got about six months, seven months to look at that bill, and eventually you passed the omnibus bill, because the concerns that were raised that were valid were dealt with and those that were not, you just went ahead and did what you had to do. But at the end of the day, you got your bill.

We understand here there's a principle in Parliament that the opposition has the right to be able to ask critical questions—and yes, sometimes to be a bit tough on the government—but at the end of the day, we understand that the government has a majority and it will get its way. But you shouldn't be doing so in a way that sends, I think, a bill such as this through speedy passage without an ability to give it critical analysis.

With that, I would ask that we have a little break to have a bit of a chat. I would, at this time, move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Chair (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? I didn't hear warrant to adjourn the debate.

All in favour, please say "aye."

All those opposed, please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Members have risen. There will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1717 to 1747.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Members, please take your seats. I call this House to order.

Mr. Bisson has moved adjournment of the debate of Bill 212.

Will all those in favour please stand and remain standing?

Will all those opposed please stand and remain standing?

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 6; the nays are 32.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I declare the motion defeated.

Mr. Bisson has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: We should have the same vote. It would be a lot better. I thought we had won that one; I thought it was rather close.

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Yes, Madam Speaker, do we have a quorum in here? I'd like you to count everybody.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): I'm going to ask the table to check if we have a quorum.

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): A quorum is, in fact, present.

Mr. Bisson has the floor.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wanted to make sure because I wanted to make sure the government heard what we have to say here.

I just want to make it clear to the government. Listen, I said at the beginning—and I'm happy that the government House leader was paying attention prior, and I know she's here again listening. I just wanted to make sure that she understood that there are sections of this bill, quite frankly, that we can support. There's some stuff in this bill that, at the end of the day, we understand are housekeeping items or are issues dealing with trying to make some processes a little bit easier. However, part of the problem we've got is that there are sections of this bill that are, quite frankly, problematic.

For example, there's a whole change to the Municipal Act. We can support generally where the government is trying to go as far as the timing of getting this done for January because we understand, for municipalities going into the election next year, it's important that we get that done, and we support that. There are parts of that bill that we support, but I know, in speaking to my leader, Andrea Horwath—we had a chat about this earlier, and I've had a chat with some other people in the municipality of Timmins—that there are some municipal financing issues that it would be really nice to be able to address in that bill.

Are we going to be able to get that done? I don't know. But the point is, for the government to bring in a huge omnibus bill that gets us changing a whole bunch of acts—and I've got to say that the omnibus bill is about that thick—in the end, it's really leading us to try and pass legislation that's not properly vetted.

As I said earlier, our staff were here on the weekend. Members were reading the bill on the weekend.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): Stop the clock for a minute, please. I appreciate that people are tired and it's late in the afternoon, but I'm having a hard time hearing the member. So if you could keep it down. Thank you.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: As I was saying, there are sections of the bill that we can support.

Interjections: Blah, blah, blah, blah.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Come on. I don't do that when you speak, Mr. Whip. Why are you doing that to me? Come on.

Interjection: You're wasting your time.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, well, there we go. There we go. The parliamentary assistant over there, the guy who wants to be minister and hasn't been appointed yet—he's all excited. I can understand why, because if you're really excited, maybe Dalton will see that and bring you into cabinet. You notice I didn't use your name. It's a he. I'll narrow it down to that because I know the women of that

caucus are much, much smarter than to make comments like that. They're very rational people.

Anyway, back to the bill: I just want to say that there are sections in this bill that are problematic. I think what the government has to do is take a little bit of a pause and admit they're pushing this thing through a little bit too fast. You've got an omnibus bill that's about this thick. We're changing a whole bunch of sections of the act to make sure that, at the end of the day, they're going to make some changes that are going to affect a whole bunch of acts, and all we want is to make sure that what is passed are changes that, at the end of the day, will get us to where we want to go.

I've seen omnibus bills passed through this House before. I've seen, from time to time, where governments have passed omnibus bills and have pushed them through the House lickety-split without giving the public an opportunity to have their say in proper time to make amendments to the bill, for the bill to be scrutinized. The government passes the omnibus bill and then they're back two or three years after introducing amendments to their omnibus bill because they made errors in the first place.

You've seen that. I remember it happening with the Conservative Party a couple of times. There were a couple of omnibus bills that they dealt with, and even they had to come back and make changes.

Remember the one on the Municipal Act, my good friend across the way from Essex?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: No, no, not that one. When they first got elected in 1995, there were changes to the Municipal Act. It was a huge omnibus bill, and you were on committee—Mr. Levac, I think, was on committee with me. We were warning the government that we didn't support a lot of what the government was doing, "but at least if you do it, get it right. Don't make a bill that, at the end of the day, not only doesn't get you where you want to go, but makes things worse because the bill is not properly written." The reason that happened was because the government had pushed that bill through the House so fast that neither the government, the opposition nor the public had a chance really to scrutinize the bill and take a look at where the errors were. The public soon found out, after the bill was passed, that there were problems. I remember that the government came back with seven amendments to that bill. Seven times they came back and made amendments to that legislation because they didn't get it right the first time.

All I'm saying is: I understand. The process is really simple here. We all have a role to play. Members of the opposition will hold the government accountable in the British parliamentary system. We say to the government that we're going to put a good eye on what you're doing to make sure you do it right, and if there are things we think you've erred on, we're going to point those out.

But at the end of the day, we understand. The parliamentary system says that the government has a majority, so the government is going to get its bill. It's not as if

you're not going to get your bill at the end of the day; we understand that you will. But what we're saying to you is, we should pause, return it to the House leaders, have a bit of a discussion with the House leaders about how we proceed, so that we in fact put ourselves in a position that we're able to deal with those parts of the bill that we can agree on and move those things through, so that at the end we have the ability to deal with those things that we have agreement on. And then, to those things that we have no agreement on or that we have some difficulty with, all I'm asking is that we send the bill out to committee. Advertise across the province and allow members of the public to have their say: municipalities, environmental groups, anglers and hunters, people in the planning business. There are all kinds of people affected by this bill. Let them pronounce themselves on this legislation. You know what? At the end, maybe the public will decide that they're not interested and maybe they will decide that there's not a huge amount of concern, and so be it. But at least the process will lend itself to allowing the public to have its say and making sure that we look at this omnibus bill in the proper light.

Omnibus bills, at the end of the day, are problematic by their very nature. It's something that I think all of us, as legislators, quite frankly don't have a very big comfort with. I know my friends who were then in the Liberal opposition to the Conservatives, and certainly Conservatives and Liberals who were in opposition to our government, really did not like omnibus bills, and for good reason. Because at the end of the day, they deal with far too much far too quickly and put us in a position, quite frankly, of passing bills that can be flawed.

I just say to the government across the way, please understand what we're saying here. We're saying that at the end of the day, we understand you're going to get your bill, and we're saying that there are some things in this bill that we can support. But we're also saying that there are certainly some things in this bill that are problematic, and we need to have a bit of a discussion about how we deal with that procedurally.

I was a bit surprised that we were informed at House leaders' meetings last week that this bill would come here on Monday. I indicated at that time to our government House leader—and Mr. Runciman did the same—that we shouldn't proceed on Monday, and the reason was very simple: People wouldn't have a chance to read the bill; it's this thick. We pointed out at the time, "Give us the time to look at it. Let's look at what's in the bill and we'll decide what to do." We've now done that, to a degree. We still have some of the bill that we haven't read, quite frankly; we're still going through it. But there are some problematic parts of the bill, and we need to deal with those in a way that makes some sense and gives

justice to what we're trying to do here in the Legislature. So we are saying to the government, "Let's do the right thing."

For example, one of the things in this bill that we saw, another section, was that there are some amendments in regard to the issue around hunting within the MNR Act. There are some changes being contemplated there. I had a chance to take a quick look at them, and, quite frankly, some of them seemed kind of innocuous. But then I flagged it by somebody who I pass legislation on to when I want to get a critical analysis of something, and they pointed out to me that there were some problems in the way that it was particularly worded. It wasn't so much what the government was trying to do, but the way that the wording was put forward certainly created difficulty as far as what their perspective was when it came to their ability to be able to hunt and fish.

Now, for some people here, that may not be important, but I can tell in you, in places around southwest, southeast and northern Ontario, there are a lot of people who are fishermen, a lot of people who are anglers and hunters, and who do so respectfully and want to know at the end of the day that we have some rules that, yes, protect the wildlife, that we don't over-fish or over-hunt, but that still give people the ability to enjoy those recreational sports that are out there.

I personally don't hunt anymore. I can't get a moose tag; that's a whole other story. Moose tags are impossible to get, so after many years of application, I decided to stop applying for a tag because, like everybody else, I got frustrated. So what I do is fish. I can tell you, over the years it has become much, much more restrictive when it comes to the ability of anglers to get out on the lake and do some fishing, and I can tell you stories about that.

There are also changes to the agricultural act. I talked to our good friend John Vanthof on the weekend. I asked him to go to the Internet—hopefully he'll have that done sometime this week—and I asked him to read those sections of the bill. John Vanthof, for those who would know, is the candidate who ran in Timiskaming—Cochrane in the last election and was within 300 votes of winning that particular election. He's a dairy farmer. I've asked him to take a look at this bill in some detail.

I would say to you, Madam Speaker, that there's much to be done and there's much to be said about this bill. And seeing that we're almost at 6 of the clock, I would ask that we just stand this down and continue on the next day.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Ms. Cheri DiNovo): It being 6 o'clock, or very close to, I declare that this House stands adjourned until tomorrow morning at 9 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1759.

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
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Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiques et de l'Immigration
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Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
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Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
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McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
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Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

**Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité
permanent de l'Assemblée législative**

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

**Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent
des comptes publics**

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Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

**Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité
permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé**

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przewdziecki

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Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qadri
Elizabeth Witmer
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Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
Jeff Leal, Liz Sandals
Maria Van Bommel
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

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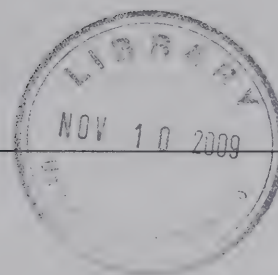
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**Legislative Assembly
of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**

Tuesday 3 November 2009

Mardi 3 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Tuesday 3 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mardi 3 novembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by a moment of silence for inner thought and personal reflection.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 2, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I move the following amendment:

That the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting therefor the words “that the bill be not now read a second time but be referred back to the government with instructions to:

“(1) Reintroduce those sections of the bill pertaining to the Municipal Elections Act as a separate bill.”

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Mr. Bisson has moved that the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts, be amended by deleting all the words after “that” and substituting therefor the words “that the bill be not now read a second time but be referred back to the government with instructions to:

“(1) Reintroduce those sections of the bill pertaining to the Municipal Elections Act as a separate bill.”

Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I think that amendment kind of speaks for itself. I want to say again to the government: Understand that we are not trying to be deleterious here. You need to understand what we're up to.

We understand there are sections of this bill that are, quite frankly, time-sensitive—the municipal election will

be next year—and we understand far too well the implications of holding up this entire bill, including that section of that bill that would deal with the Municipal Elections Act; it would cause a problem for our municipal partners here in Ontario. That's why we're suggesting to you that you remove that section of the bill out, you reintroduce that section of the bill as a separate bill and then we would be very amenable to allowing that bill to go forward so that you can get passage before Christmas so it's enacted before January 1, which is the time deadline you need for the municipal election.

Your changes to the Municipal Elections Act are a step in the right direction. They're not everything we want, but we consider them better than not doing anything at all. Therefore, we would support that. But then it would allow us to take the rest of the bill and give it proper time so that we can really have ourselves, as members of this Legislature, along with the public and those people who are interested in those amended acts, a look at this omnibus bill in some detail and determine if there are things that need to be changed. Because I remind the government House leader that we've had it happen plenty of times in this place where governments have introduced omnibus bills only to come back and amend their own omnibus bills numerous times after because, quite frankly, errors were made in the drafting. It's not that the people who are drafting it aren't doing their jobs; it's simply that it's a huge bill. There's lots in it, and sometimes errors are made. We just need to make sure that in fact the bill does do what the government intends for it to do, and if there are people who have a problem with those particular amendments to these bills, that they have a chance to have their say.

Trying to pass all of that before the end of this session, which will be the second or third week of December, I think is unreasonable, so we're trying to find a middle ground, give the government those parts of the bill that they need, and we'll support that, but allow those other parts of the bill to go to committee. I'm looking for some support from the government House leaders and others in order to be able to move in that direction.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in terms of this bill, again we've heard basically from the opposition that the bill is too thick. That has been their main argument; it's too many pages. I know in the past they stood up and argued, “The bill is only three pages. The bill is too short.” This has been the basic crux of their argument, but it doesn't really hold water.

I think that the member opposite, the member for Timmins–James Bay, is doing his part in opposition to criticize the bill or the government, and that's his job. But on the other hand, he has done very little to look at the necessary parts of the bill that cross many ministries, which all governments have done in order to catch up to a lot of technical interpretations that have to be adjusted from time to time.

The government has given ample opportunity to both opposition parties to be briefed on it with ministry staff. In fact, the Attorney General said that they can come and get more briefings at any time if they want. But to stand up here for—I think they were here for three, four hours yesterday just complaining about the thickness of the bill; that was their argument. And now they say they want to decide which sections should be in or out. Well, if they decide on one section, then what about the other sections? Again, they say, “We haven't had time. It's too thick. It's too complicated for us.” Well, their job is to look at the bill and make some valid criticisms based on the content, not on the thickness of the bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further comments and questions?

Mr. John O'Toole: I did have the privilege last evening to speak on Bill 212, and I think we'll be holding debate on this for some time. But I want to make it clear that this is an omnibus bill. It's actually a distraction from the other trouble the government's in—the \$25-billion deficit, \$100 million in consulting fees, the whole eHealth scandal, ministerial resignations. There you have it.

This is sort of like playing Jeopardy! here this morning because there are so few people here. I thought I'd read a quote and see if they can tell me who may have said that. It reads as follows, “This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation.” I'm quoting here, so I'm going to have to give this to Hansard.

I want you all to follow me and say slowly, “Public hearings.” These two words go nicely if you believe in true democracy, if you recognize that public input is one of the tools that make for good legislation. If you really believe in this tool, instead of saying the same old-fashioned things—who do you think said that?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Michael Colle.

Mr. John O'Toole: No. Actually, Michael Colle wasn't allowed to participate in those days as much as today. He's the whip. It was Dalton McGuinty in 1999. Those are Dalton McGuinty's famous words. I'm going to repeat them: “This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation.” And it's not good for democracy.

Clearly, in what they've got buried in here, I uncovered two pieces of information: one on cancelling legislation retroactively—legislation that has already been passed, voted on, duly debated and discoursed on in the House, and then it's been cancelled retroactively. It's malicious in that way, but in other ways as well. In know in section 16—there's a section that's worth looking at:

nuclear waste. It's changing the rules around nuclear waste. And in my section, section 17, it talks about titles to property. So, it's a very—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. The member for Trinity–Spadina.

0910

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I'm going to be supporting this motion, of course, because it's eminently reasonable. I should point out that all governments have done this in the past. I remember the infamous Bill 26, which was introduced by the Tories many years ago. It was of similar length, and we all complained and attacked. It's the usual kind of thing.

My only complaint against the Liberal government is that they are calling this bill—or at least in the explanatory note: “The bill is part of the government initiative to promote good government.” I had so much fun with that line. I was roaring with laughter. My complaint in my speech is going to be 20 minutes on that kind of balderdash that we put into bills.

Look, this is housekeeping, by and large. We never really get much done to debate the bill. That's generally the case. But to call this a good-government kind of initiative versus housekeeping—come on. It reminds me of the Tory bill, the Tenant Protection Act. I had a laugh with that one, because it wasn't about protecting tenants; it was about protecting developers. So when you call this bill a good-governance bill, I tell you, I just can't take it. I have to, of course, prepare myself to attack the government as best I can and use as many minutes as I have to be able to do that and to then say, in the brief 30 seconds that I have left, to say to my colleague from Timmins–James Bay—he's dead on.

The only substantive amendments that have anything to do with some substance are the changes to the Municipal Act. We deserve to debate that separately from this. That's the argument my colleague makes that I believe the Liberals are missing the point on—either deliberately or otherwise. But that is the essence of the point: We should separate these two. By and large, most of these other housekeeping changes we can live with. But the other needs a real debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate? Yes, the House leader.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm pleased to be able to participate in the debate this morning and to respond to some of the comments that have been made by those opposite.

As the member for Trinity–Spadina noted, every government has introduced a good-government bill. In fact, the NDP in 1994 were the first government to introduce such a large bill that really is a housekeeping bill that looks at—

Interjection: Number one.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Yeah, they're proud to be the first. We've had, since 1997, 16 good-government bills. What was that? It wasn't good back then? I think that you probably would have argued the opposite on that back then. We've had 16 good-government bills, and

these good-government bills look at how we can improve different pieces of legislation. As all of the members of the Legislature know, times change. We have new technology, we have new-term terminology, we have new names of ministries, and as part of that we have to update our legislation. We find ourselves at a couple of junctures in our mandate looking at how we can clean up the legislation and improve the system for all those who use government services.

We use these good-government legislations to enable us to have these amendments and move these things forward—things that would not be able to sustain a piece of legislation on their own. I know that my friends in the third party are well aware that this is what is happening. Our friends on both sides have been given ample opportunity to have a briefing. We have offered briefings since we told them about the legislation over two weeks ago. We have offered them the opportunity to meet with representatives from the Ministry of the Attorney General and various ministries to talk about the amendments. We are moving forward. We are pleased to be moving forward.

My friend from Timmins–James Bay has introduced an amendment which we will not be supporting, because we feel that we have plenty of time here this morning, and again yesterday afternoon, for a number of hours—despite the bell-ringing—we had a number of hours of debate. There's ample opportunity for everyone in this House to provide us with their opinions. This will go to committee, as all of our legislation does, and they will have ample opportunity there again to speak to it. I appreciate the opportunity this morning to speak to it as well.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Timmins–James Bay to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to thank all members, but I want to speak first to the points made by the government House leader. I want you to understand: My argument isn't that we're doing this because we didn't have enough time to read the bill; that ain't the point. Yes, it's true, the government introduced this bill and there wasn't sufficient time to be able to prep for debate on Monday, but that's not the reason we introduced the amendment whatsoever. The reason we introduced the amendment was that we recognize that you're trying to get this entire bill past third reading within the next four sessional weeks we have here in the Legislature. We're here for this week and for three more weeks after the break on November 11 and you want to get this bill passed in that record time. We're saying that this particular bill has a whole bunch of things in it that people need to scrutinize much more, and to do so, they need some time. That's why we suggested to the government that we delay the third reading and we give it some time in committee this winter so that we can actually pass the bill later on this spring, in February or March, when we come back here in the Legislature.

The government is still going to get their bill in the end, but the real winners are going to be the public,

because they will have an opportunity to speak to those parts of the bill that they either support or don't support. I just think that when it comes to omnibus bills, we need to take our time and do it right.

We understand that in the bill, there are sections that you need to get before January 1, and those are the changes to the Municipal Act. What we're saying to you is that we get it; we understand. We're not going to hold up the changes to the Municipal Act, because there is a municipal election coming in 2010. You may not have done everything we wanted in the Municipal Act, but it's a step in the right direction, and we recognize that these changes are needed for the next municipal election.

That's why I believe our amendment is quite reasonable in saying, we'll allow you to pass that section by third reading within the next four weeks by reintroducing it as another bill, then allow a second reading debate to happen on the rest of the bill, and then from there, send it out to committee later on in January or February and have third reading later on in February or March. You'll get your bill and the public will be satisfied.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Thank you—

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Are you going up?

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's okay; I'm just surprised they didn't get up.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: The Liberals obviously don't want to discuss this. That's okay—

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: Can I ask for unanimous consent that we defer back to the Tories so that we can allow them to do their lead?

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Do we have unanimous consent? Yes.

The member for Halton.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: I was amazed that the Liberals didn't want to address this bill. However, I was amazed this morning when I got to my office. I opened the computer—I know how to do that now—and the quote of the day popped up, which I thought was interesting. The quote of the day was from Kin Hubbard, and his quote was, "Now and then, an innocent man is sent to the Legislature." I thought that was very appropriate for this morning.

I would say that I'm going to share my time with my critic from Burlington when the time comes.

I would also like to comment on how the minister, in his opening remarks, talked extensively about how this bill will scope various inquiries that are called by the government. It should also be noted that the new requirements made by this bill for calling an inquiry are somewhat more difficult to satisfy than in the past; therefore public inquiries will be more difficult. We've been calling for a public inquiry into the eHealth scandal, where this government has allowed \$1 billion of taxpayers' money to be distributed to their friends in the

consulting business, and consultants hiring consultants and so on and so on. We've read that in the newspapers; we've talked about it ad nauseam. The government is making it more difficult to call those public inquiries.

But the minister went to some length talking about how this bill will be able to scope inquiries, join different inquiries together. They focus on how an inquiry is going to start, making it somewhat more difficult. They talk about the process. This bill talks about the budgeting of the process and needing ministerial approval for those budgetings. As the inquiry goes on, the minister continues to have control over the budget. Ostensibly, if the inquiry was going badly, the minister could withdraw the budget or at least shorten the budget and therefore control the inquiry process.

0920

As I read the bill, I find that this is all about control and controlling the inquiry process as opposed to any accountability or creating any transparency that might be evident if this bill truly was a bill about good government. In my comments when the bill was introduced, I mentioned that, if this is good government, what came before? The obvious answer might be that there was bad government. And if this bill is to correct that bad government, it does a very poor job of correcting bad government, because I think that this bill continues with that tradition.

I would also like to begin by outlining in greater detail some of the serious concerns we have with the procedure used by the Liberal government to introduce this bill. The opposition is elected by the people to ensure good, accountable and transparent government on their behalf.

Bill 212 is over 300 pages long. It came with a compendium close to 100 pages and a 37-page explanation note. It includes 26 schedules. It's a huge tome. There are 36 pages of explanatory notes and 26 schedules.

Schedule 2 alone amends 79 different pieces of legislation. Schedule 21 significantly amends the Municipal Act. Schedule 5 and schedule 6 introduce two completely new bills. I think that's going a little above and beyond: When you introduce two completely new bills in an omnibus bill, I think it does discourage debate surrounding specific pieces of legislation.

I would assume that the government is going to—and that might be a difficult thing to do—give favourable timelines for debate on this bill. I hope they will give favourable timelines for committee on this bill. However, I am very suspicious. Having been in this Legislature for 14 years, I've developed some suspicion of what this opposition—what this government might do—soon-to-be opposition. I suspect that we're going to see a time allocation motion on this bill sometime in the future. I hope that time allocation bill is in the distant future.

I heard a rumour that you want to pass this bill by December, and I find that ludicrous when a bill of this size, affecting 22 different ministries, is going to be debated in a brief period of time and when the people of Ontario will want to comment on this bill during the

committee process. That committee process could take weeks and weeks.

The organization of the bill as a whole is very difficult. A single act is amended in various different schedules of the bill, making any comprehensible understanding of the overall changes very difficult and very time-consuming, because you have to go through the bill, you pick out the various changes to a piece of legislation and then you have to arrange those changes back in. So the organization of this bill has been—I don't know if it has been purposeful, but it has been organized in such a way that has made it very difficult for the opposition to pull that together, especially given the very short time frame.

Before Bill 212 was introduced, the Liberals were tight-lipped with the opposition about what they were introducing. We had no idea an omnibus bill of this size was coming down. We had only our ideas about what the Liberals were going to do. We knew that the selection of juries was under some difficulty and that a bill would be coming forth to fix that. Yes, that is included in here, and that's probably one of the good parts of this bill. However, we had no idea that there was going to be such an extensive bill passed or brought to the House when this was introduced.

We were wondering whether this bill would create a larger bureaucracy, which would follow the Liberal pattern, but we did not know. With the billion-dollar eHealth scandal, the \$2.5-billion harmonized sales tax grab and the massive \$24.7-billion deficit, the official opposition hoped this would be a good-government bill in order to fix some of these disasters. I must say that we were disappointed.

These billion-dollar scandals are coming at a time when Ontario's unemployment rate is a whopping 9.2%; we're approaching double-digit unemployment in this province. As recently as last month, Statistics Canada noted that "Ontario has suffered the fastest rate of employment losses since October [2008]," which was 2.9%, "mostly in full-time and in manufacturing, construction and a number of service industries." Those are full-time jobs. Those are jobs that support families. Those are jobs that support dreams. Those are jobs that are lost to Ontario, along with the hopes and dreams that those families had.

I hoped that this would be a good-government bill. I hoped these scandals would be addressed. I hoped this bill would bring Ontario back to being the number one province in this country economically, driving the economic engine, driving this country forward. However, again, I was disappointed.

On so many levels, this is not a good-government bill, and my hopes for the people of Ontario are not great at this point in time. But the people of Ontario are extremely resilient, and they will have the opportunity to bring this province back. It won't be the government that brings it back—government policies perhaps—but the people of Ontario are the ones who will make it work. Their work ethic and their level of education and know-

ledge and their skill levels will bring this province back to its rightful place as the engine of economic growth in this country. However, under this government we haven't seen the kind of legislation that's going to make that happen.

The timing of this bill makes me wonder if the Liberals hoped that the staffing resources of the opposition would be diverted from representing the people of Ontario, that we would be forced to put aside the scandals and spending abuses rocking the Liberal government to review these 600 provisions that are presented in this bill. The PC caucus and our staff have reviewed this bill. We do not have the huge government support that the government has in examining this bill in its entirety, but we'll represent the people in debate. We encourage interested groups and the people of Ontario to contact us with their concerns. We'll address them, and we encourage the people of Ontario to make themselves available to the committee process and to express those concerns to the government of Ontario. Surely a bill of this size will travel the length and breadth of this great province.

But we will not let this bill divert us from continuing to uncover the scandals that the Liberal government has been saddled with in their summer of scandal. We will not let this bill stop us from calling for Liberal accountability when it comes to how Ontario's hard-earned tax dollars are spent—and in the case of this government, how our hard-earned tax dollars are wasted. We will not let this bill stop us from representing your concerns here on the floor of this Legislature.

We were provided a 324-page bill that on so many levels is not good government. This bill was created after the work of 22 different ministries; we were given 15 minutes after the bill was introduced to review those 600-or-so provisions before commenting. The public only got a look at this bill in its entirety yesterday when it was put up on the website. Providing the opposition with nothing, the Liberals leaked Bill 212 to the media. This Liberal practice slapped democracy in the face. This Liberal practice denied the people of Ontario fairness and a strong voice. This is not accountable or transparent; it is definitely not good government.

The Attorney General highlighted—and I could point out that from the accountability point of view there are a number of acts that this bill affects; for instance, the Collection Agencies Act. Subsection 3(3) of the bill removes the director's supervision of the registrar's performance of his or her duties. It seems to me that that makes it less accountable in that bill. The Consumer Reporting Act: It does the same thing. It removes the director's supervision of the registrar's performance of his or her duties. The Film Classification Act: Again, it removes the director's supervision. The Funeral, Burial and Cremation Services Act: Again, it removes the director's supervision. There are nine acts which that same clause follows—the director's supervision of the registrar is removed. That does not give me confidence that this government is becoming more accountable. It is removing accountability from the civil servants.

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Also, in the Ministry of Culture, there are eight different acts which remove the accountability of one representative or another.

All of those things bring less accountability to the governance of this province and make it more difficult for taxpayers to ensure that their tax dollars are being well spent.

The Attorney General highlighted the amendment to the Juries Act when he introduced Bill 212. This is one section of close to 600. He spoke briefly about the new Public Inquiries Act, and that is one section of 26. He said Bill 212 will ensure "the people of this province are well served by their government." Fifteen minutes later, after the Liberals had leaked the bill to the media, they asked the official opposition to respond. Is this how the Liberal government serves the people of Ontario? Is this how they define good government? Is this representative of their democracy? I say, too bad for Ontario.

The Liberals slapped democracy in the face a second time when they provided one working day and the weekend for the opposition to review the 600 provisions and respond again. We worked hard and diligently for these three days to ensure that we could serve the people of Ontario in this chamber. We reviewed and examined those 324 pages, and we found that this is not just a housekeeping bill and it is not always a good-government bill. Tucked within these 600 provisions, 324 pages and two new acts are some significant changes that I have serious concerns about. I would like to voice my extreme disapproval on how the Liberal government has handled this bill. It is undemocratic, it is bad government and it is not serving the people of Ontario well.

Schedule 2, which is 56 pages long and amends 79 existing acts: A majority of these changes are administrative. Compared to the scandals and spending abuses currently rocking the Liberal government, this is not the time to be addressing a majority of these issues. We are facing serious economic crisis in this province because the Liberal government's economic agenda has failed, their famous five-point plan. We haven't heard too much about the five-point plan in the last little while, and that's probably a good thing, because the five-point plan was an unmitigated disaster which drove industry from this province, drove over 300,000 manufacturing jobs out of this province and left this province reeling as a have-not province in a Canada that sees new provinces across this country becoming "have" provinces. That is a sad day for the people of Ontario.

We are facing serious economic problems. Our unemployment rate is almost in double digits. We have been saddled with a \$24.7-billion deficit that will divert taxpayers' money from public programs to interest payments in years to come. A \$24.7-billion deficit, to put it in context, is almost double what the previous largest deficit was. It isn't just a few billion dollars—a few billion, if you can use that term—more than the largest deficit in the past; it is almost double the largest deficit in the past. The context of that is truly scary.

We are in a time when Ontario has become a have-not province under a government voted the worst provincial government in Canada. It is monstrous for the Liberals to have introduced this bill during a provincial crisis they have played a large part in creating.

I cannot help but wonder if this good-government bill isn't a scandal to cover up those previous scandals that we were talking about.

Mr. Bill Murdoch: On a point of order, Madam Speaker: I know Mr. Chudleigh is doing a great job speaking, but I don't believe there's a quorum in here.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Is a quorum present?

The Deputy Clerk (Mr. Todd Decker): A quorum is present, Speaker.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you. Continue, member.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Monique just stepped in.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I'm here.

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Oh, they snuck one under the wire there.

I want to touch on a few points within the 79 acts amended by schedule 2 of this scandalous bill. Remember that there are not only 79 acts that are amended; there are two completely new bills brought in under this legislation.

This schedule removes section 95 of the Ontario Municipal Board Act. It strips away the right of Ontarians to send a petition of appeal to the Lieutenant Governor in Council after a decision or an order of the OMB is made. It removes one more ability for people to control or have input into the things that occur in their neighbourhood or in their community. I think that certainly doesn't represent good government; that represents a more restrictive society, and I can't see how this government can think that would be a good thing. As the heavy hand of the Liberal government increasingly pounds down on the lives of Ontarians and on the independent decision-making of our municipalities, I have serious concern that this avenue is being abolished.

This schedule amends the Compensation for Victims of Crime Act. It does not speak to victims such as Patricia Marshall and her daughters, whose victim rights were infringed. It does not speak to the unacceptable statements used in the crown's letter to Mrs. Marshall explaining why he withdrew charges against a young man caught masturbating in her yard while peering through her windows. It does not speak to the contrasting reasons given by the crown and the assistant deputy Attorney General of the criminal law division to this victim explaining why the charges were withdrawn. It does not assure the Marshalls and the people of Ontario in similar circumstances that justice will be done. It does not force the Attorney General or this province to explain what he means by taking an issue "seriously" when he is doing absolutely nothing about it.

I'm somewhat concerned about the addition of section 10.1 in the Legislation Act. This new section will allow, through a report tabled by the Attorney General, all acts

that meet the specific requirements to be repealed. I understand the general purpose of this provision, but there are a number of unanswered questions. For example, I'm unclear as to how this report will look. There is no indication of what procedures will be used to vote on this report, including how this chamber will determine if a bill should be removed and therefore not repealed. I am concerned that the opposition will be unaware of the decision-making process used to decide which relevant bills are included in the first instance.

I think I should remind the government that bills are not the property of the government. Bills are the property of the people of Ontario, and removing them is a very serious business. If this government cannot find the time in this Legislature to bring those bills forward for some debate before they are removed, then I think Ontario has certainly lost some of its accountability and has lost some of its transparency—two issues that this bill purports to support and yet, in this instance, it has not supported at all. In 2010 and 2011, this new provision could provide the Liberals with opportunities to table a report and bury the opposition in another mountain of paper as further scandals come to light. This is not good government.

Schedule 2 is massive. It repeals bills and allows older bills to be repealed more easily. This is not simply housekeeping, this is not accountability, and this is certainly not good government.

Schedule 5 creates a new act, the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act. This is not housekeeping. It is a disgrace to have it included within the good-government bill, and it is the subject of a third party amendment to this bill, an amendment which I will be pleased to support when it comes to a vote. That vote should be many months from now as we continue to debate this bill in this House.

This schedule should not have been included as part of this bill. If the Liberals wanted to ensure good government and transparency, they would have introduced this new act as a separate public bill. Yet, with a twist of irony, the Liberals have included this new act as part of their Good Government Act. It boggles my mind why the Liberals chose these titles: the Good Government Act, the Adjudicative Tribunals Accountability, Governance and Appointments Act. Did they really believe that these titles would be nice enough for a nice photo op? Did they think that the scandals would not be revealed?

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This is not a Good Government Act or accountability. This is scandalous. It's a typical act of bad government because it's restricting people's abilities for accountability and transparency. And we get this from a government that has been voted the worst government in Canada. This new act has a nice name. It may divert people from its content. But I think people will dig a bit and realize that the act is supported on some pretty weak fluff.

First, what is the scope of this act? It tries to codify accountability, but for who and for what adjudicative

tribunals? Adjudicative tribunals are defined as “an agency, board, commission, corporation or other entity that is prescribed” in the massive government the Liberals have created. That’s all we know. I don’t know, Ontarians don’t know and even the media likely doesn’t know, unless it has been leaked to them, who this act will apply to. Why? Because the affected administrative tribunals will be laid out in regulation. When? We don’t know. All we can say for certain is that it doesn’t affect the unaccountable, bad government of the Liberals, the body that needs accountability and transparency more than anyone.

But it seems to get worse. Not only are we left in the dark about accountability but we don’t know which administrative tribunals the appointment process and this new act apply to. Again we have to wait for the regulations. We’re asked to vote on something which could be referred to as a pig in a poke. Again we have to wait for the regulations.

This is bad government in the name of good government, unaccountability in the name of accountability, and a scandal to cover up scandals.

If people aren’t convinced, they should look to see when this new act will take effect: not immediately. In fact, only when the government decides to proclaim the schedule will this new act come into force. When is that? We don’t know, but likely it will involve a nice photo op.

Why was this new bill introduced in a housekeeping bill? Why are we denied knowing how widely these accountability measures will be applied? If it is so important to introduce them in the middle of a provincial crisis, why is the government not ensuring this schedule has immediate effect? Why is the worst government in Canada imposing accountability on administrative tribunals when it is failing so miserably in this regard itself?

A second problem I have with this new bill, this new act, is the requirements being imposed on administrative tribunals. Accountability and good governance are principles that the PC caucus and I take seriously. It is why we have such a problem with this bill on so many levels. But in equal measure, we take the effective and efficient operation of government extremely seriously. We believe that a government acts on behalf of the people of Ontario and that every dollar it spends is not the government’s money, not Dalton McGuinty’s money but that of the taxpayers. That’s why we were so upset last spring when this Premier was at a photo op introducing the construction of a building in Toronto, I believe it was, when he spoke about the money that was coming from Ottawa and the money that was coming from McGuinty. It was as if he had put his hand in his pocket and taken out his own money to finance this project. I’ve noticed that he has changed his tune since then, but it was an indication of the attitude, the cavalier attitude, that this government has developed over their six years of governance of this province.

Let’s see what the Liberals believe is a good use of taxpayers’ dollars. Remember that this in the middle of an economic downturn, when the government’s mis-

management has saddled Ontarians with billions of dollars of scandals, tax grabs and an astronomical deficit. This bill will require administrative tribunals, whichever they are, to develop “public accountability documents” and “governance accountability documents.” If we dig a bit, we see that these include a mandate and mission statement, a consultation policy, a services standard policy, an ethics plan, a member accountability framework, a memorandum of understanding with the responsible ministers, a business plan and an annual report. This list does not even include what comes under regulation.

A \$24.7-billion deficit is becoming less and less surprising. This new bill is only one more example of how the Liberals like to sit around a table busying themselves on bureaucratic red tape as opposed to efficiently managing the economy of our province.

I would like to address two more concerns I have with this new act. The first comes with what the Liberals have termed “clustering.” In principle, I can see some efficiencies in this idea, but reading through this new act, I do not see how it is being applied. Again, we are left in the dark about what effect this clustering will have in reality. The act of clustering will be done in regulation.

I believe that this clustering that the government is doing could also lead to many abuses of accountability and transparency. It gives the government additional powers over the operation of inquiries so that they can be scoped, they can be focused, they can be restricted, their budgets can be restricted, and they can be moved in a way that suits the government, as opposed to the accountability, the transparency and the ultimate truth that public inquiries are meant to bring.

When a cluster is created, the new bill allows the Lieutenant Governor in Council to appoint an executive chair, an associate chair, one or more vice-chairs for each tribunal in the cluster and one or more alternate executive chairs from among the associate chairs. My goodness, that’s a lot of Liberal appointments for one inquiry. Wow. My head spins when those figures come out, and I think of all the Liberals who are going to get those nice appointments. For the most part, we don’t know what the chairs will do. That’s in regulation as well. We know they may create an even larger bureaucracy. That has been the way of this government.

Another section controls the budget of the agencies, boards and commissions. Government controls structure, they control budget, they control mandate and they control the inquiry. They have significant control over the results of that inquiry as well—and that, my friends, is not good government.

My final concern, topping off all the others, is found in subsection 20(2) of the new act, which states: “Any failure of an adjudicative tribunal or its chair to comply with this act does not affect the validity of any action taken or decision made by the tribunal or the chair.” That gives everybody a pass. A basic tenet of British law that goes back to the Magna Carta of 1215 is that when there’s been an error made, the judgment of that court or tribunal is set aside, yet this bill will change all that. The

history of the British law system, the history of the Canadian system of law, the history of law in Ontario will be changed in that you can make any mistake you want during the inquiry, but it won't affect the outcome. I don't know how a government can say that that is accountable, that that is transparent or that it adds to the ability of a government to bring freedom and accountability to the people of Ontario. Just think about the ramifications that could happen during those inquiries.

With that, my friends, I've got to share my time. I'm going to turn it over to the member from Burlington, who I know is equally shocked. I'll look forward to a long and healthy debate on this particular bill as we move through the 600 different schedules. Many of them are housekeeping, but the fact that two complete bills have been included in this legislation makes it unacceptable on the very surface of it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Burlington.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm happy to join my colleague the member from Halton to speak to Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts.

As the title implies, this bill, if passed, amends or repeals a number of acts and enacts new acts. I believe the bill actually makes about 600 changes in total—600 changes. The McGuinty Liberals say that this bill is part of the government initiative to promote good government. Well, I want to point out that just because they have dubbed the bill the good-government bill doesn't mean that it is.

I would hope that the McGuinty Liberals don't think they can pull the wool over our eyes or the eyes of Ontarians by referring to this bill as "good government." I know Ontarians are a whole lot smarter than that, and they will see right through what is trying to happen here with this bill. Clearly I do not agree with the title of the bill, and I would argue that it is a bad-government bill, not a good-government bill. It's simply bad politics in the name of good government.

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For starters, this bill was introduced in the Legislature last Tuesday. That's a week ago. However, it was not posted or made available to Ontarians until later Thursday afternoon. That's two days later. The first day of debate was then scheduled for yesterday, which left almost no time to prepare. That is really quite appalling, especially for a bill of this magnitude. I'm sure the intent was to overwhelm the opposition parties and Ontarians, and to push this bill through without giving us and the public proper time to review it, which I will say really does hinder the democratic process.

This government has had months to review this bill. They have had time to review it so that they fully understand it and have had time to consult with stakeholders about the implications of the bill. As my colleague has already mentioned, there was a great delay in getting this bill introduced. If this government wasn't prepared to provide copies of this bill and make it public

or get it up on the website for all the world to see, they should have delayed the introduction of the bill until they were prepared.

I would suspect that the answer has something to do with the McGuinty Liberals wanting to attract attention away from the long list of Liberal scandals and the record-breaking \$24.7 billion in debt that was announced just a couple of weeks ago. I will elaborate on these points a little bit later.

I want to first talk about the democratic process that is supposed to be in place in this House and how discouraged I am that it isn't. It would seem that the media had an inside scoop on this bill before opposition MPPs even knew about it. A case in point: On Wednesday morning, we were privileged enough to read about some of the implications that this bill would have through the press. I tried to pull up the bill on the website, and as I already mentioned, it was nowhere to be found.

I guess I really shouldn't be surprised at this, coming from this government. There seems to be a trend here. Earlier this month, we learned about the findings of the Auditor General's report regarding this government's electronic health records system through the media—and days before the actual report was released. I'm sure this was quite disappointing to the Auditor General himself. I will say that as a courtesy, the Auditor General provides a copy of his report first to the minister and the ministry. In this case, it was the Ministry of Health and it was in advance of the report being released. This does, of course, come with strict instructions that the report not be decimated in any way or copied. This government should have more respect for these sorts of rules and for the people of Ontario, but instead, they seem to have this culture of entitlement and they often deviate from the rules.

Another example is the 2009 budget. There, we learned about what was in the budget days before it was actually tabled. The Premier himself deliberately breached the convention of budget secrecy when he announced the amount the government was promising to spend on infrastructure over the next two years prior to the budget being tabled. I greatly respect the traditions of this Legislature and the democratic process that should be taking place each and every day here in this House. I would hope that this government learns to respect that as well.

As I already mentioned, I am quite sure the intent of this bill was not housekeeping at all, as the McGuinty Liberals have indicated. It is to deviate from the long laundry list of Liberal scandals. It seems quite suspicious to me that this 322-page bill was dumped on us as this government tried to dodge the scandals that they have been plagued with. The McGuinty Liberals needed to provide a distraction from all the opposition research that was being done to expose this government's continued long list of scandals. The fact that a majority of this government's agencies are not even subject to freedom-of-information requests wasn't doing the trick anymore; they needed another tactic, so they introduced this

massive bill. I guess the hope here was that the McGuinty Liberals could buy themselves a little time in which to perhaps avoid a new scandal that might be revealed. As we all know, for weeks now, each time we pick up the morning paper, turn on the news or listen to the radio, there's a new link to a Liberal scandal. The hope of this bill is to serve as a distraction to try to prevent all of that. However, there is no bill large enough to cover up this government's secrets.

It is no coincidence that a couple of weeks after the PC caucus called for a public inquiry to resolve the many unanswered questions that remain about the serious abuse and misuse of taxpayers' money that occurred within the McGuinty Liberal eHealth scandal, this government dumps a massive 322-page bill. The Premier has refused a public inquiry. The Liberals voted down our opposition day motion requesting a public inquiry and the Liberal-majority-held public accounts committee voted down bringing the former eHealth Ontario CEO, Sarah Kramer, and former board chair Alan Hudson before the committee to be questioned. They blocked off all roads to answers that Ontarians are asking for and deserve to know.

Haven't the McGuinty Liberals learned that you cannot just make your problems go away by covering them up? They should, because this tactic has backfired on them before. Let me refresh their memory: Over the spring and summer of 2008, the PC caucus held this government to account on their neglect of the very serious C. difficile issue. This government knew about the severity of C. difficile dating back to 2003, when a serious outbreak killed over 20 patients. The ministry did a study—they actually did a study—into those deaths in 2004, yet this government did nothing. And as everyone remembers, hundreds of people lost their lives and got sick. Finally, on May 28, 2008, former health and long-term-care minister George Smitherman announced that mandatory reporting of C. difficile cases in hospitals would begin on September 30 of that year.

Fast-forward a few months. David Caplan takes over as Minister of Health and Long-Term Care and moves that date from September 30 to September 26. Well, guess what? September 26 is a Friday, a day when the Legislature does not sit for question period, so the opposition cannot immediately hold the government to account here in the House; a day when the ministers don't walk out of the Legislature to stand in front of the media to answer the questions the media have; and a day when Ontarians are preoccupied with the upcoming events of the weekend. Aside from Friday, September 26, being the beginning of the mandatory reporting for C. difficile, it was also the same day that the government dissolved the Smart Systems for Health Agency and replaced it with eHealth Ontario. Now, here's the irony: This is a so-called good-government bill that's been introduced to cover up the disastrous scandal that ended up occurring at eHealth.

Another example is the release of the Cancer Care Ontario audit—this is shameful. The audit was quietly released the same day as the auditor's report on

electronic health records systems. The audit found that the agency had spent nearly \$75 million on consultants over the last two years and did not consistently apply tendering rules for all of the contracts. The audit also found that one consulting firm received single-source contracts worth \$18.7 million over a three-year period. None of these expenses billed by consultants were pre-approved by the agency, and almost all of them weren't backed up by receipts. So again we see the McGuinty Liberals follow this trend by releasing the Cancer Care Ontario audit on a day when MPPs, the media and Ontarians were preoccupied with the Auditor General's report.

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I would like to make one more point regarding this bad-government bill. I think there are really some significant changes in this bill, and the fact that they have been thrown into a 322-page document raises some very big red flags.

What is in this bill that the McGuinty Liberals are hoping we won't find? Why are the large parts of this bill not stand-alone bills? My colleague has already spoken about the proposal to replace the Public Inquiries Act. Well, I think this is really interesting timing, since the PC caucus has called on the Premier to call a public inquiry into the eHealth scandal. I won't pursue this today, but I can only wonder whether this is one of the changes the McGuinty Liberals were hoping to hide in these 322 pages of changes.

Regrettably, I again have to say that this is not the first time that we have seen this government play the game of "find the needle in the haystack." They dumped binders full of OLG expenses on us; they dumped thousands of pages of Ministry of Health FOIs on us; and perhaps the most notable, they dumped six binders of information regarding the freedom-of-information request from eHealth Ontario. I would just like to remind the McGuinty Liberals that we went through those six binders. We went through them page for page, and I am sure that every member on the opposite side of this House knows what the result of that was. This bill will be no different. We will go through this bill page for page and pull out what the McGuinty Liberals hope to hide.

Let's talk about what this bill does.

The bill makes some significant changes to the Municipal Elections Act. One change that would affect almost everyone is the change to section 5, which amends the voting day from the second Monday in November to the fourth Monday in October. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing has said that a number of seniors' groups, as well as female candidates, have asked for this change, and I can appreciate that. I think that a lot of people, particularly snowbirds leaving us as of November 1, wanted to have this date moved forward. This will allow more Ontarians the ability to vote.

I have spoken about the democratic process already, but I will just add that voting is certainly part of that democratic process. So if we can encourage a greater voter turnout, that is something I will strongly support.

The change in the election date, of course, changes the deadline for a candidate to file their nomination papers.

As I see it, this bill would also amend the cut-off date for nomination papers. It would move the time from 4 p.m. to 2 p.m. on the second Friday in September. Two o'clock seems a little odd to me; I don't know why they picked 2 o'clock. I wonder why it's not still 4 o'clock, which is closer to the end of the day and easier for most people to come in and file.

This bill also addresses the needs of candidates and electors with disabilities, another good thing in this bill. The bill includes a change that states, "Campaign expenses related to a candidate's disability are excluded from the candidate's spending limit." So if a candidate needs a ramp built to their new campaign office, that can be done without actually charging it to the campaign expenses.

I'm happy to see the progress that we have made as a society over the years as to the accessibility issues, and I think this is a positive change.

This bill would also allow the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., MPAC, to enter into an agreement with the Registrar General to broaden the range of information available to MPAC to create a preliminary list of electors. As you know, the Registrar General is responsible for the province's birth certificates, birth registrations, marriage certificates and name changes, as well as death certificates. This could prove to be helpful with respect to getting a more accurate voters' list. I think we have all heard about outdated information on voters' lists, and we all know it can be quite the nightmare. I just want to ensure that all the appropriate steps are taken to ensure that there are no privacy breaches here, and that we are mindful of the confidentiality of this personal information.

The accuracy of the voters' list was of concern to me, and I did take the time to address that in my 15 hours at the estimates committee with the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Specifically, I asked the minister a question regarding the MPAC enumeration process. In 2006, as you may remember, the enumeration process included a new code, and the new code was simply the letter "U." It was to determine citizenship status. It created some concern in municipalities because many voters were classified with that "U," which represented unconfirmed citizenship. This meant that those voters had to then fill out an amendment form so that their citizenship would be known and proof would be given, which is very important. I don't disagree with that, but you can imagine the real problem at the polls when something like this occurs. Many, many backups happened. There were huge lineups in some municipalities.

MPAC has indicated that they're working on this, and they hope to improve the accuracy of this enumeration process. My question to the minister was to provide some insight into the status of this and whether municipalities could look forward to a less cumbersome process for the 2010 municipal election. Actually, if I remember correctly, the minister pointed out that it was a very good question. In his response, the minister told me that he undertook this issue with the Minister of Finance, as MPAC falls under the Minister of Finance's portfolio,

and that, if they were to make changes to the Municipal Act, it would be one of the areas that would be addressed.

But you know what? I see in this bill that MPAC is given the ability to use data from the Registrar General regarding the registration of births, deaths and changes of name, but I don't think that it will address the unconfirmed citizenship status issue. As far as I can see, this issue has not been addressed in this bill. And because of how quickly this bill has been thrown at us, I must say that I have not had the opportunity to take part in my technical briefing yet from the staff of the ministry. I am, though, looking forward to that later this week, and I will be asking that very specific question of the staff.

Another point that I want to make is with respect to the environment and land use planning cluster. I also addressed this in my 15 hours with the minister at the estimates committee. The cluster will combine the Assessment Review Board, the board of negotiation, the Environmental Review Tribunal and also the municipal board. Although these tribunals affect municipalities directly, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing would not respond to my questions and suggested that they be asked of the Attorney General. I see that the minister will not be speaking on this issue, on this so-called good-government bill, so again, he will be off the hook with respect to questions regarding this new cluster and the implications that it has for the municipal sector.

I'd also like to point out that the initial report that resulted in the proposal for the environment and land use planning cluster was prepared for the Minister of Government Services, even though the tribunals fall under the jurisdiction of the Attorney General. So I don't really buy this whole thing of the "not my issue" response, and I will certainly be looking for further answers regarding the cluster when I speak with the ministry staff.

I want to touch on what I think has been missed in this bill. I think that since this bill opens up the Municipal Elections Act, there is an opportunity to talk about some other changes, changes that have been talked about over the last couple of years but have not been presented in this bill.

I would like to talk about voting locations. In the last general election, and even in my by-election in 2007, I received many e-mails and phone calls from concerned parents regarding their children's schools being used as voting locations. I understand the logistics of using a school as a voting location because they're really the centre point of a community. They also have facilities to allow for voting stations to be set up mainly in the school auditorium so it facilitates people coming in and going out. However, most recently, we have worried about the safety of our schools, and I think that schools have most doors locked, and strangers and visitors must check in with the office and that kind of procedure.

So I can appreciate the concern of parents that outsiders, even though they may be going through their democratic process of voting, are really outsiders to that school, and they're coming into their children's school while their children are there. I think that school security has really increased over the last years, and we have all

heard some disturbing stories. We really need to ensure that we do everything in our power to protect the safety of our children.

It is for this reason that I'm suggesting that we try to coordinate a professional development day occurring on the same day as the municipal election. This would allow for municipalities to use the school as a voting location, and it would also put the many concerned parents at ease that their children are not put in any potentially dangerous situations. This bill allows for the opportunity for us to look at this now, because we're opening the act. The Attorney General should work with the Minister of Education on this front and arrange that a PD day be coordinated with the municipal election. I know that as an opposition member, our recommendations are most usually not considered, let alone taken, but I feel that this one has very strong merit. I will, of course, be suggesting this as an amendment to this bill, and I guess I will just have to wait and see how it is perceived by the Liberal majority.

I will wrap up my time today by reiterating a comment I made earlier. This bill is truly bad politics in the name of good government. It has the potential to be a political diversion for the long list of Liberal scandals. It has diminished our democratic process by not providing all members of the Legislature with the bill in a timely way, by rushing a bill of this magnitude to debate before the hard copies have even arrived at our desks, and by leaking parts of this bill before members had a chance to even look at it. This is certainly my definition of bad government, not good government.

We have already seen far too much money and time wasted on the McGuinty Liberals' photo ops. There is absolutely no more room for any waste, especially now with their record-breaking \$24.7-billion debt. If the McGuinty Liberals are truly to their word on this being a good-government bill, they will act in that way and they will accept the recommendations from the opposition parties for amendments—from my colleagues as well as myself—because that is what good government does. As members of official opposition, it is our role to critique the actions of this government and present suggestions that will benefit all Ontarians. It is also the current government's role to adopt some of these suggestions of changes that may previously have not been considered.

On that note, I look forward to the continued debates on this bill, and I look forward to following this bill to committee.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): It being close to 10:15, this House stands recessed until 10:30. When debate continues, we will begin with questions and comments.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: I'm pleased this morning to rise and introduce a couple of the truck drivers in Ontario

who are under stress from the lack of action by the government: Gus Rahim, who's the president of the Truck Training Schools Association of Ontario, Rich Lupiccini and Rob Coleshaw, who join us here in the visitors' gallery today.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's my honour to introduce the family of page Hannah Walters-Vida: her mother, Heather Walters; her father, Ron Vida; and her sister Sophie Walters-Vida. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Brownell: I welcome to the Legislature today Dale Petrie, the general manager of the Ontario Soybean Growers, and Barry Senft, the CEO of the new Grain Farmers of Ontario. I know that they certainly will welcome you this evening to committee room 2 at 5 p.m. for the Ontario Soybean Growers' reception. So welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I'm really delighted to introduce to you the grade 10 students from one of the best schools in the city of Toronto, Oakwood Collegiate. They're here with three teachers: Jeff Jones, David Adam and Gaynor Priestley. I say, welcome.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: It's also my honour to introduce my new daughter-in-law, Karen Lao Quintero, who has just emigrated to Canada from Cuba. Welcome, Karen.

Hon. Ted McMeekin: Today, Madeline Thomson, the daughter of a very good friend of mine, Paul Thomson, will be visiting the Legislature. Madeline is with her grade 5 class from Charles Beaudoin school in Burlington. I understand they'll be doing a tour and exploring the historic legislative precinct, including an encounter, perhaps, with you later, Mr. Speaker. So we'd like to welcome them today to Queen's Park.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: My question is to the Minister of Health. Let me say that I am pleased to hear that the McGuinty government is listening to some of the advice that my health critic, Christine Elliott, and the PC caucus have brought forward. I encouraged you to open up workplace and school clinics and also to recruit retired nurses and doctors to make sure we get more shots in arms immediately.

A question to the Minister: How is it that the government can say how many inmates in our prisons have been inoculated, but you're not aware of the number of high-priority Ontario residents that have received the shot?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I appreciate that the Leader of the Opposition recognizes that we're working very hard to get the vaccination out and into Ontarians as quickly as we possibly can. Our goal—our target—is to get the 2.2 million doses that we currently have into people by the end of Saturday. Our public health units across the province are working very, very hard to accomplish that goal. The vaccine does nothing for

people when it's in the fridge. We need to get it into people as quickly as we can, and we are committed to doing that. We have hundreds of thousands of people by the day, and by Saturday, it will be, I hope, 2.2 million.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's precisely why the PC caucus recommended clinics opening 24 hours a day, and workplace and school clinics, because it does no good when the vaccines are sitting on shelves in refrigerators. We hope the government immediately puts that advice into effect.

According to government records, some 70 convicted prisoners have been given the H1N1 shot. However, no guards were, not even Anita Mastracci, a prison guard who is seven months' pregnant. Eddy Almeida, chair of the corrections division, said the government told them it deferred to public health on who should receive the vaccine. He told us this was "a break from practice," and based on past practice, officers were assuming they would get the H1N1 flu shot as well.

Does the minister think it's appropriate that inmates are getting the shot but prison guards like Ms. Mastracci are not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me make it very clear that pregnant women are in the highest priority group. I urge all pregnant women to get that vaccine. The unadjuvanted vaccine has now arrived in Ontario and is on its way out to the public health units. All pregnant women should receive the vaccine as quickly as possible. As I say, we have a new supply of 86,000 doses of the unadjuvanted vaccine that is specifically for pregnant women. I urge all pregnant women to get that vaccination either in a clinic or from their doctor. Many doctors will be having the unadjuvanted vaccine as well. Pregnant women should be receiving that vaccine. It protects not just them; it also protects their unborn child.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mr. Tim Hudak: Here is the problem: While prisoners are getting their H1N1 vaccine—as I've said, a number already did as of Monday—pregnant women, young children and vulnerable people are still lining up at clinics across the province. It's very sad that somebody like Anita Mastracci, a seven-months-pregnant prison guard, is forced to line up behind the prisoners before she will get her shot at one of the clinics across the province. I hope the minister will correct that immediately.

The minister says that the reason prisoners are getting the H1N1 flu vaccine is because you're only following medical and public health officials' directions. But we understand that yesterday, Ron McKerlie, the Deputy Minister of Government Services, arbitrarily cancelled the prisoner vaccination plan. Why are you saying you're following the advice of health officials when it's clearly not the case?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are following the advice of the experts. I think that is actually what your critic has advised us to do.

High-risk people are receiving the vaccination. That includes people who are in our prisons. If the Leader of the Opposition is recommending that we withhold vaccine from people in our prisons, if he would prefer to see those people in our hospitals, then I think he should stand up and say that.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Tim Hudak: Back to the Minister of Health: The problem that Ontario families have when they see this growing fiasco at the vaccination clinics is that sometimes the government says it takes the medical officer of health's advice and sometimes it doesn't. Sometimes they say they follow their plan, except when they don't follow their plan.

While we know how many doses of H1N1 vaccine were given to inmates, the minister has yet to tell the general public how many people in the general population have received the vaccine to date. Minister, chapter 9, page 1 of your own Ontario Health Plan for an Influenza Pandemic says the government should have "a mechanism in place to monitor antiviral and vaccine uptake and effectiveness." Why haven't you followed the Ontario influenza pandemic plan that you yourself commissioned?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't think there's anyone here who is going to defend what we saw last week, when clearly the demand for vaccine far outstripped our capacity to deliver it in some parts of the province. I should say that Niagara region, however, delivered the vaccine very smoothly. We learned from that. There are lineups that are very, very short. There are clinics where there are no lineups at all. Over 2,000 places across this province are now delivering the vaccine.

Again, I urge people who are in those high-priority groups to get their vaccine as quickly as possible. There is still vaccine available, although I must say we do expect, as we accelerate the distribution of the vaccine, that we will start to see empty fridges this week. We are hoping that the federal—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1040

Mr. Tim Hudak: That's exactly the concern: We are now almost a week into this and we're still seeing fridges packed with H1N1 vaccine when clinics close their doors. We're still seeing lineups of pregnant women and young children while vaccine is sitting on the shelves. I certainly am pleased with the progress in the Niagara area and commend all the health care workers and Dr. Robin Williams.

The minister makes an important point for us: You have a wide variety of approaches that are happening in every corner of the province. Minister, I cannot believe that in a city the size of Toronto, there was not one single clinic open this past Sunday, a very convenient day for families to take their kids to get the shot. Will the

minister direct public health units where needed to have clinics open this Sunday to help Ontario families?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are getting updates from public health units. What I can tell you is that we have hundreds of thousands of people now vaccinated and that our target is 2.2 million people vaccinated by the end of the day on Saturday.

Let me tell you, as of November 3—that's today—in Guelph, 2,300 have received vaccinations; in Niagara, 45,000 have received vaccinations; in Cornwall, in eastern Ontario, 20,000 people; in North Bay and Parry Sound, 20,000—and they are expecting to run out very soon; in Ottawa, 80,000 people; in Hamilton, 20,000 people; in Sudbury, 18,000 people; in Toronto, 100,000 people; in Peterborough, 10,000 people; in Brantford, 7,000 people—and the list goes on.

We are working as hard as we can, as are health care workers across the province, to respond to this pandemic, to get the vaccine that we have into Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Tim Hudak: The minister makes my point for me: While there has been progress in Niagara, other areas like Hamilton and Toronto are far behind, and we continue to get concerns from pregnant women and moms who can't get their kids into lineups.

We've brought forward a number of suggestions, Minister, that I understand the McGuinty government is now thinking about implementing. Now is your chance for those areas that have fallen far behind. Will you give direction to the public health units where needed to open up clinics on Sundays, to open up clinics around the clock and to put workplace and school vaccination clinics into play to help families get the shots, where they need them?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: With the greatest respect, I do suggest that the Leader of the Opposition learn what's happening on the ground today. We have learned from what has happened. The clinics are working as quickly as is possible.

As I say, we expect to be out of vaccine by the end of the week. To move to a 24/7 clinic cycle, to respond to political partisanship, I think would be irresponsible. We will continue to work as hard as we possibly can to get that vaccine to people. It's our responsibility.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Premier. Thanks to the efforts of Ontarians and hard-working health care professionals, H1N1 vaccination lines have finally subsided somewhat, as of yesterday. But people are still trying to decide whether this government actually has a coordinated plan. To cite one example, pregnant women in Peel have been told they are not a high priority even though they are in the rest of the province. Why are expectant mothers in Peel different from women everywhere else in Ontario?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question. This is the first that we learned of this particular

circumstance. We and our public health officials haven't been anything but unanimous when it comes to who are to be found in the highest-priority groups and who are those who are most at risk, including pregnant moms.

I want to take this opportunity to thank the public health officials in Peel and everywhere across the province for the heroic efforts that they have been making to adopt best practices as quickly as they can. I think if you turn on your TV this afternoon and this evening, you will see that those long lineups have all but disappeared. There are 2,000 places now that are giving out the vaccination. We have doubled the number of public health clinics. We have made some real progress.

I want to thank Ontarians for their patience and understanding in allowing those in the high-priority groups to get in line first.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Families want to be reassured that this government has a coordinated plan, but their confidence continues to wane. In some parts of Ontario, vaccinations are happening quickly and efficiently, but in other communities, parents are waiting or buying their way to the front of the line at private clinics.

This government has had months and months to plan. How does the Premier explain the woeful lack of coordination in the rollout of this vaccination?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I just want to assure Ontarians that public health officials and units right across the province are making real progress. They have learned from some of the shortcomings that were manifest last week. There are in fact many more clinics open. They are open for extended hours. I've just received a note here that's saying that when it comes to Peel, they are running clinics from 9:30 a.m. to 9:30 p.m. from Monday to Friday, and on Saturdays and Sundays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

So I think what's important to understand—my colleagues opposite continue to look in the rearview mirror. What I would encourage them to do is to develop a better understanding of what is happening on the ground today. There are now many more sites that are providing vaccinations, including the doubling of our public health clinics.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Parents, expectant mothers and hundreds of others with delicate health conditions simply want to do the right thing to protect themselves and their families, but their government has fallen short. Over the coming weeks, millions more vaccinations will be delivered. How can Ontario families be assured that this government has a coordinated plan to handle this well?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Again, what I can say is that we have, working together, made some tremendous progress. I think that's evident in how the vaccination is now being delivered in Ontario. We have doubled the number of public health clinics. There are now at least 2,000 sites, and that's probably a number that is growing

in terms of places where people can obtain the vaccine: family health teams; community health centres; hospitals, certainly, for our health care deliverers; and the public health units. We've doubled that number from 50 to 100 right across the province. So we expect that we will continue to find ways to make more progress.

I'll say two things to Ontarians in particular: One, thank you so much for your patience; for allowing those people in the priority groups to get in the front of the line. They are most at risk, and we owe it to them to ensure that they get their vaccination first.

Secondly, I would say to the broader population: Continue to wash your hands. Continue to cough or sneeze into your sleeve. Stay home if you're sick. In the end we are still going to ask, we're going to plead with you and urge you to avail yourself of the vaccination opportunity. We want as many Ontarians as possible to get their vaccination.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is to the Premier. The Minister of Health said that the government wants to administer 2.2 million doses of the vaccine by the end of the week, but yesterday she couldn't say exactly how many people had already had their shot. So how can the Premier know if the government is actually on target if he doesn't know how many vaccinations have actually been administered?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Health.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Perhaps I'll repeat: We are on track to deliver our target, which is 2.2 million doses to the people of Ontario, by the end of Saturday. We are getting updates from public health units. They are very busy delivering the vaccine. That is their number one job, but let me share some numbers that we do have.

In Guelph, 2,300 people have received the vaccine; in the Niagara area, 45,000 people have received the vaccine; in Cornwall and eastern Ontario, 20,000 people; in North Bay and Parry Sound, 20,000 people; in Ottawa, 80,000 people have received the vaccine; in Hamilton, 20,000 people; in Sudbury, 18,000 people; in Toronto, 100,000 people; in Peterborough—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I'm trying to do the math as the minister brings the numbers forward, and the simple math suggests that hitting the target is going to be extremely difficult. There are 100 clinics operating, and each clinic can vaccinate 2,000 people a day. The best-case scenario is 200,000 vaccinations a day. If the government is to reach 2.2 million, the target that they're talking about, they would have to have already vaccinated one million people. Is that the case?

1050

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'd like to help the leader of the third party with her math a little bit. People are getting the vaccine in clinics; that is correct. We also have over 2,000 other locations where people are getting the vaccine. Our public health officials assure us that it's

an aggressive target but it is an achievable target. So we are on track to deliver 2.2 million doses of the vaccine by the end of the day Saturday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Instead of teaching me math this minister should learn how to roll out a vaccination program that has the confidence of the people of Ontario. That's what she should be focusing on. You know what? Families just want to be assured that this government has a coordinated plan, but their confidence continues to wane. First, a complete lack of communication—a complete communication breakdown; now, Ontarians see a government that says it's on target, but they can't actually say exactly how many people have been vaccinated.

Over the coming weeks, millions more vaccines are going to be delivered. How can Ontario families be assured that their government has a coordinated plan to handle the swell?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually need to say that I don't think the leader of the third party or anyone in this House should be running down our public health workers at this time in a pandemic. Our public health workers across the province are working day and night to get vaccines into people. These people are working very, very hard—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Start the clock. The clock had been stopped, but there were interjections from the opposition side.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Hamilton East.

Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have every confidence that our public health units will deliver the vaccine in a way that respects people. They have learned from the problems that did exist in the first week and they have revised their plans. They've expanded the number of clinics; they've expanded the number of places where people can get it. We are dealing with a shortage of vaccines in coming—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Minister, more people are going to get H1N1 as a result of your government's failure to distribute and administer the vaccine effectively.

Let's look to the line of next defence. Minister, is the ministry ready with a steady and sufficient supply of antivirals?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I confess that I had a little bit of trouble hearing the question, so let me speak to our preparedness to respond to what we know will be an

increased number of people who will be ill with H1N1. We are seeing more people in the hospital, but I have to say that the vast majority of people who are admitted to hospital are subsequently released. There are approximately 82 people who are in the hospital as of yesterday; the vast majority of them are doing just fine.

We do have probably the world's best pandemic plan in place. Our hospitals are ready for the surge of people that we expect. I will be happy to answer more in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Chapter 9.2 of the influenza pandemic plan says, "To be effective, antiviral treatment must be started within 48 hours of the onset of symptoms." The plan calls for an effective distribution system for antivirals, but the lead stories on all the news-casts throughout the day indicate that there is not an effective system in place for distributing the vaccine. You haven't followed the influenza pandemic plan up till now. Will you start following it and ensure that the province is ready for the increased supply of antiviral medication that we know we're going to need?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We have an ample supply of Tamiflu. It has been distributed to pharmacies across the province. We have enough Tamiflu for 25% of our whole population. That is by any means considered an ample supply of Tamiflu.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour le premier ministre. I, like most people, recognize that electronic health records are vitally important. We have to succeed, but not at all costs. It has to be transparent; we have to be accountable. In the midst of the investigation by the Auditor General, eHealth brokered a quarter-of-a-billion-dollar, behind-closed-doors deal with the OMA, a secret \$236-million deal that only came to light as a result of Nightingale announcing to its shareholders that it is well positioned to benefit.

Premier, why wasn't the public made aware of this deal, and who approved it?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: In fact, this news appeared in the auditor's report on page 32. He has a special section entitled "Electronic Medical Record Systems." Specifically, on page 32:

"In 2005, in partnership with the Ontario Medical Association, it provided funding"—that is, the ministry—"to enable an estimated 30% of Ontario's primary-care physicians, or 3,300 of them, to acquire EMR systems." He goes on to say, "More than 1,700 additional primary care physicians had applied for funding.... The board of the eHealth Ontario agency recently approved another \$100 million in EMR support.... The eHealth strategic plan targets a 65% EMR adoption rate"—that is, electronic medical record adoption—"by primary care physicians by April 2012...."

He goes on to total all this up to at least \$225 million. It's all here, in black and white, in the auditor's report.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Let's get our facts straight. The Auditor General documented \$1 billion spent on eHealth, with little to show for it. In the midst of the investigation, \$236 million goes out the door. To me, \$236 million is a huge amount of money—it is bigger than a lot of the ministries sitting on the other side—and that, to benefit 5,700 physicians. If you do the math and say they're allowed \$30,000 each, that makes \$171 million. I'm interested in finding out who gets the other \$65 million from that deal.

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: What I can say is that so far we have 3,300 Ontario doctors who are using electronic medical records, which are covering four million Ontarians. With this new \$236-million investment, we want to have another 5,700 family physicians using electronic medical records, covering another six million Ontarians, for a total of 10 million Ontarians who will then be covered by our electronic medical record system. We think that's exactly what Ontarians want us to keep doing, which is making progress when it comes to laying the foundation for our electronic health record system.

RURAL HEALTH SERVICES

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: My question is for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. I know from experience with the health care issues in my riding of Lambton-Kent-Middlesex that there are many challenges unique to rural communities that need to be addressed, so I was very pleased to hear about the formation of the rural and northern health care panel earlier this year.

There are serious concerns being expressed about the process the panel is following and the lack of consultation to date. Hearing from Ontarians about health care issues and services in their communities is very important, and I know my constituents expect to have a voice. Could the minister please address the concerns of my constituents?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can say that this is a very important issue to many Ontarians and I appreciate the opportunity to speak to it.

Ontarians should have access to high-quality health care no matter where they live in the province. That's why we created the rural and northern panel to examine the unique challenges that these communities face. We will be consulting with Ontarians. This plan is about improving health care services in their communities. Their voices are crucially important to this.

1100

The panel is now in its first stage. The first stage is developing the rural and northern health care framework. Part of their work includes engaging Ontarians on five specific questions, through the website. Their report will then form the base for discussion at broader community consultations—the second phase of our approach—and inform the development of our provincial framework, which is the third and final stage of their work.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mrs. Maria Van Bommel: I'm very glad that I'll be able to reassure my constituents that they play a real role in shaping how we will improve the health care of our rural communities.

One of the greatest concerns for people in rural communities is the sustainability of their local health care facilities, especially our rural hospitals and emergency rooms. Hospitals are important to communities, and constituents in my riding are understandably anxious about changes occurring at their hospital. Could the minister please confirm that the panel will be looking at the sustainability of hospitals and emergency rooms as part of the larger picture of local health care in rural communities?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I agree that hospitals and health care facilities are important to communities, and that is never more true than in rural communities, and certainly we hear that from our rural caucus members on a regular basis.

The terms of reference for the panel recognize the challenges, and I would like to quote from that: "The challenges facing rural and northern communities across Ontario are long-standing, difficult and complex. Health care facilities serve multiple roles relative to those in urban centres and are farther apart, with significant travel distances between locations."

I can tell you that the panel will be recommending guidelines for LHINs, to be used when considering changing roles for health facilities.

I very much look forward to the report from the panel, consulting with Ontarians in rural and northern communities, and moving forward on a framework to improve health care services in our rural and northern communities.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is to the Premier. On the very same day the McGuinty Liberals blocked Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson from giving evidence about the untendered-contract spending spree at eHealth, the assistant deputy minister of health, John McKinley, told the public accounts committee it was he who blocked the auditor's investigation of the ministry. No public servant would put a career on the line for nothing. The question is this: Was John McKinley assigned to the program area specifically to block the auditor?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: Clearly, the auditor pointed out that he did not receive the compliance, which had, until that point in time, completely characterized our dealing with the auditor on any number of files.

The deputy minister has had an opportunity to speak to this, the secretary of cabinet has had an opportunity to speak to this, and I have certainly done so as well. We want to make it clear to all of our civil servants, all of our ministers and everybody inside the government that our responsibility, and in the public interest, is to comply

with any request coming from the auditor, and we intend to do that.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Ted Arnott: The Premier's answer clearly underlines the reason why we need a public inquiry.

Mr. McKinley told the public accounts committee he was trying to have the scope of the audit broadened before letting in the auditor, but he had only been recently promoted to the program area and had very little personal stake in the outcome of the audit. It defies common sense for a public servant who was just appointed to the program area to take a personal interest in whether the audit was narrow or broad or if the audit made the minister look better or worse. What on earth would John McKinley have had to gain by obstructing the auditor's investigation of the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: My honourable colleague is seeing ghosts.

This is a pretty straightforward matter. I think we should take Mr. McKinley at his word.

What has become obvious, as well, is that as soon as the matter was brought to the attention of the deputy minister, there was a phone call between the deputy minister and the auditor to clear the matter up immediately and assure the auditor of 100% compliance and support for his work. That's what happened. It was unfortunate that, for the first time ever in the history of our government when it comes to our dealings of the auditor, there was this unfortunate slip. I want to assure the auditor and Ontarians that it will not happen again.

AUTOMOBILE INSURANCE

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is to the Premier. Yesterday, the McGuinty government caved to the powerful insurance lobby by announcing deep cuts to basic benefits for auto accident victims. Mandatory rehabilitation and medical benefits for serious injuries will be slashed from \$100,000 to \$50,000. Second doctors' opinions will no longer be allowed. As a result, the auto insurance industry will save hundreds of millions of dollars in claims costs while individuals will be left unprotected and vulnerable.

Why is this government putting the interests of powerful insurance companies ahead of the interests of ordinary Ontarians?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I am confident that we have achieved the right balance here. My colleague believes that we should have public auto insurance. He would have the government create a brand new bureaucracy that would have to employ thousands of people to somehow act as a substitute for the private sector model.

We think we've struck the right balance. What we want to do is ensure that Ontarians have greater choice when it comes to the kinds of insurance that they might want to purchase for themselves. We've tried to strike a balance between affordability and coverage. Even the most modest package that will be required in law in the province of Ontario will be in keeping with the best com-

pensation packages and coverages that are available in other Canadian provinces. So we think we've struck that balance to help drivers, frankly, better manage their costs associated with auto insurance.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: These changes of which the Premier speaks will force accident victims to turn to rehabilitation and medical treatment in the public health care system. There, they will find that the chiropractic and physiotherapy services have been delisted and that wait lists are so long that timely intervention becomes almost impossible. Victims will be forced to pay out of their own pockets for private care and will end up in debt. These changes will hurt Ontarians and help insurance companies.

Why won't this government put people first?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I assume that "putting people first" is code for public auto insurance. The NDP government in the province of Ontario rejected that—fortunately—for the right reasons. We reject it as well.

With respect to premium increases under the NDP government, it is worth reminding ourselves that they went up 20% in just two years. On our watch, after six years, we are still down about 2% on average. We understand that pressures are growing when it comes to costs in the insurance industry. That's why we brought in a package which I again believe strikes the right balance between consumer choice and affordability. Again, the minimum available package in the province of Ontario is on par with the very best right across the country.

TAXATION

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: My question is to the Minister of Revenue. Two weeks ago, I attended a meeting put together by the Brampton Board of Trade. The groups of businesses at the meeting were made up from various sectors and were all different sizes. There were some businesses at the meeting who had questions about how the HST was going to be implemented. Many businesses are aware of the benefits that harmonization will have for them.

My question is: What will the HST mean for businesses in my riding and across the province?

Hon. John Wilkinson: I want to thank my friend for the question and particularly for the warm reception that she and I both received at the Brampton Board of Trade.

Brampton and Mississauga South have one of the highest concentrations of manufacturers in the province of Ontario. Under our tax reform package, manufacturers will be receiving some \$1 billion worth of tax savings each and every year. Why? Because we need our manufacturers, our advanced manufacturers, to be even more competitive in the global economy.

As I criss-cross Ontario, I can tell you that people understand that the economy we had before this recession is different than the economy we're going to have after the recession. They understand that their government has

to make a bold move to ensure that we are increasingly competitive.

1110

On this side of the House, we are for reducing income taxes for people and businesses so that we are more competitive. We on this side of the House believe that there's a brighter future for our economy if we will just have the political courage to take this necessary step and have—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm glad to hear about the measures being taken to educate businesses about the HST. However, some of the businesses, like Purolator, in my riding of Mississauga-Brampton South want to get prepared for the transition by clarifying any questions now. Over the next couple of days, I know the Ontario Chamber of Commerce is hosting the Ontario Economic Summit at Niagara-on-the-Lake. I'm sure many of the businesses there will have similar concerns.

My question is: What are you doing to reach out to the businesses which have specific, technical, HST-related concerns?

Hon. John Wilkinson: We recently released, in conjunction with the federal government and the government of British Columbia, the transitional rules that will apply in the year 2010, a year of transition, when we go from having two sales taxes collected by two governments in this province to just one sales tax collected by one government.

I have had an opportunity to travel across Ontario, as have my colleagues, talking about the benefits, but there are specific questions that businesses have, and there are a number of opportunities. I can refer all businesses to a website called ontario.ca/taxchange. All of the latest information is there.

Working in conjunction, my ministry, the Ministry of Revenue, and the Canada Revenue Agency of the federal government will be holding joint seminars right across Ontario where we answer those detailed questions for businesses. It is important for businesses to understand that changes are coming, and it's important for them so that they can be competitive in the 21st century—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Labour: The strike at Ontario's DriveTest centres is now in its 11th week. We have people here on the grounds of the Legislature; they're demonstrating against this government's inaction. They would rather be working than demonstrating. The reason they've lost their jobs or can't start the jobs for which they've trained for months is because they've been held hostage by a strike that continues to drag on. Today, we hear that Serco presented what it referred to as its final offer.

I want to know from the minister: Given the fact that the union has rejected that offer, will he now step in, exercise the authority that he has and put an end to this strike so that people can get back to work?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I'd like to thank the member for the question.

I understand that individuals have been negatively impacted by this strike, and those that have been inconvenienced by this situation, be it truckers or new drivers or anyone—I can remember, at age 16, how eager I was to get my licence.

However, that being said, I want to remind the member opposite that we must trust and respect the collective bargaining process. We have some of our best mediators working on these negotiations, and they are making positive progress. As the member was mentioning, my understanding is that the union has agreed to present the employer's final offer to the membership this week. This means that the collective bargaining process—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: People are out of jobs, they're hurting, and we have more rhetoric from the minister.

The reality is that he does not understand that the reason people felt compelled to come to Queen's Park today is because this government has not been listening. They don't believe that this process is working for them. People need this minister to assume the responsibility and the authority that he has to ensure that this doesn't continue to drag out, so that people have an opportunity to take on the jobs for which they're trained.

This is not about a 16-year-old wanting his licence; it's about adults who have lost their jobs, who cannot get to work, and it has gone on long enough. On behalf of the official opposition and people across the province, I am calling for the minister to step in and put an end to the strike once and for all.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: What I can agree with the member on is that some negotiations can be very challenging, and they may take place, as this one does, in the public eye. But again, to remind the member, it's not only the responsibility of the employer and the union to work through the collective bargaining process; it is their right. I think this member is asking to take away that right of the collective bargaining process. I do not agree with what the member is asking for. I trust that the employer and the union will work as hard as they can to conclude with a collective agreement.

I want to commend those who are at the table in these difficult negotiations. They're finding common ground. We have a terrific record of labour relations in this province, and we will continue with our mediators to—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is for the Premier. Jake Allin is a 16-year-old student from Aylmer

who has a question, and his 8,000 Facebook friends also have a question that they would like the Premier to answer. The question is this: How can the government require a driver's licence but not have the power to ensure timely access to drivers' testing and licensing?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I appreciate the question in the absence of Minister Bradley. What I can say is that we are working as hard as we can to provide access to drivers' testing at the earliest possible opportunity to take advantage of new drivers who are coming on the scene. Not only does this open up some employment responsibilities for our newest drivers, but it also enables them to take on some social and family responsibilities to help out at home. Those are the kinds of things that I can say at the highest level.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The McGuinty government has taken steps to help experienced drivers by extending their licences during the work stoppage at DriveTest. Why is the government ignoring new and young drivers like Jake and his 8,000 Facebook friends?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: To the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: The Minister of Transportation has been working with the parties to—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The members will come to order, please.

Minister?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: First is to say again that we understand the inconvenience that those who are waiting to take their driver's test are going through; also, those who have been negatively impacted, like the truckers. I do have here from the Minister of Transportation, who could not be with us here today, that that's why we have put in place a temporary regulation to ensure that drivers who require a test to renew their licence can continue driving. It's also why Serco has been calling DriveTest applicants prior to their booked tests to inform them of the strike.

The Ministry of Transportation has been working actively to help get the message out to all those who are being inconvenienced by this situation. The Ministry of Labour is working as hard as it can with some of the best mediators that we have, not only in the country, but, I've been told, in the world. They are working to help the parties so that they can conclude with—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

1120

TIRE DISPOSAL

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: My question is to the Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs. Minister, as you have said in the House, Ontario farmers consider themselves the first stewards of the land. They are aware of the finite land and resources that are available to us and look to improve their practices to ensure that we leave

healthy and ample resources for our children and for generations to come.

There continue to be sound environmental techniques and practices developed that would be of interest to farmers to increase their environmental sustainability. Minister, what information and resources are available to Ontario farmers to increase their environmental management efforts?

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: Our government is very happy to work in partnership with farmers in Ontario to assist them to continue their environmental stewardship. That is why, in June of this year, we announced the Growing Forward environmental and climate change program. This is a program that supports initiatives that farmers want to implement on their farms.

The program includes both on-farm and food sector components. The on-farm component includes the environmental farm plan. This is a program that has been in place for a number of years. Farmers told us that it was very important to them that we continue providing resources for that, and in fact we have done so: A total of \$41.8 million in funding is available to support farmers who would be looking to implement environmental farm plans. Also, a total of \$500,000 is available to the food sector to improve their capacity for environmental strategies—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: The farmers I know are all very concerned about the environment and would certainly take every opportunity, such as the programs just outlined, to protect the land and the resources that they and we depend on.

The member from Dufferin—Caledon rose in the House a couple of weeks ago to bring up the cost of the environmental stewardship fee on tires and requested that farmers be exempt from the environmental stewardship program, as she felt the cost to replace a tractor tire was prohibitive. Then, the next day, on a radio show in my riding, the member continued to provide figures that the replacement—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock for a moment. I'm going to ask the honourable member to consider the rephrasing of aspects of her question.

Ms. Sylvia Jones: And the credibility of it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: And the credibility of it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable members to please listen to the Speaker. The clock is stopped.

I've raised an issue about appropriate language in the House on a number of occasions, and I think it's possible for members to ask questions without insinuating misrepresentation on the part of other members. I would just ask the honourable member to be conscious of that or I will be forced to just pass and go to the next question.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: Thank you, Speaker.

So the entire Ontario tire stewardship program and the cost to Ontario farmers: What I'm looking for is for the

minister to clarify the cost of replacing agricultural tires and the linkage to the environment.

Hon. Leona Dombrowsky: It is a very good question, and we do recognize that farmers want to participate in every initiative that is going to protect our environment.

What I would say to the members of this assembly is that typically farmers, who would pay between \$1,000 and \$2,500 for a tractor tire, will be required to pay a fee of \$15.84 for the disposal of that tire. This will replace a tire tax that they have been paying that was never directed toward the recycling of the tires. I think it's important to remember that there is a \$250 fee applied for those tires that might be used in the construction industry or the mining industry; those very large tires. But I would say that typically for farmers, the disposal fee for tires for farm implements is \$15.84—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

GOVERNMENT CONTRACTS

Mr. John O'Toole: My question is for the Minister of Government Services. The consulting feeding frenzy in the McGuinty government goes far beyond eHealth; it includes provincial government ministries as well as government agencies. Recently, this House learned that over \$1 million every day is being spent on consultants working for various provincial ministries. Minister, can you explain why almost one quarter of the \$390-million consulting bill comes from your ministry and will you tell the taxpayers of Ontario how this government spent the money?

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I am very pleased to answer this question. Let me just put things in perspective. In 2001-02, when their government was in power, the total expense on consultants was \$656 million. That number now stands, for 2006-07, at around \$377 million. So you can see the math: from \$656 million to \$377 million. There's a significant decrease in the number of consultants that are being employed in the ministries. It has become sometimes necessary to employ very specialized skills. That's why different ministries actually employ consultants. I will be more than pleased to answer the question.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. John O'Toole: Minister, this is 2009. You've already squandered \$1 billion; now you're spending \$1 million a day, and provincial government technology resources still aren't providing the level of service that you promised. This would include information technology which was at the very heart of the eHealth scandal that we're still talking about, and yet there are no answers or clarity.

Minister, how many more eHealth-type scandals are you hiding within your ministry? This is outrageous.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment, please.

Mr. John O'Toole: I would say that they're buried in your ministry.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): No, you need to withdraw the comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Actually, I'm surprised at this question because the honourable member on the other side asked me to give him the full briefings on every issue; we offered that. He was given the full briefing. I guess even after those meetings he really didn't understand what he was being briefed on. But let me tell you, I think most of the—

Mr. John O'Toole: That's a personal insult. Take it back.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I believe what I heard, I heard, and I would ask the honourable member to withdraw that comment.

Mr. John O'Toole: I—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thought I heard a very negative comment, but—

Mr. John O'Toole: I said it was personal. He should withdraw it.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I thought I heard something—just withdraw.

Interjection.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: Most of the consulting expenses in my ministry are actually for collective agreements. We signed almost all collective agreements last year, and that's where the expenses were. A full briefing was given to the member on the other side to actually highlight all of these issues when he met with my ministry staff.

DRIVER EXAMINATION CENTRES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Premier. Premier, in 2003 the province privatized driver testing. Many, including the NDP and the Liberal opposition of the day, warned that this move would lead to a reduction of full-time staff in favour of more part-time staff, which in turn would affect public safety.

Last summer the workers at Serco decided enough was enough, now that more than 50% of the staff at Serco are now part-time, affecting public safety. It has now become a central issue in bargaining, and that is what the strike is all about.

Premier, this part-time issue is very similar to the issue that was central to the LCBO strike. My question is as follows: If the province was prepared to intervene in the LCBO strike, are you prepared to do the same with driver tests?

Hon. Dalton McGuinty: I refer this to the Minister of Labour.

Hon. Peter Fonseca: Again I would like to thank the member for the question. It gives me the opportunity to

speak to the good work that our mediators are doing with the parties. They continue to work with Serco and the Steelworkers and help them find common ground at the negotiating table.

We know that a collective agreement that is negotiated through that process is the most stable and productive agreement that can be had. That is what we are working towards. As I have mentioned, I understand that the union has agreed to present the employer's final offer to their membership this week. It shows that the collective bargaining process works. Through the Ministry of Transportation, we have done what we can to allow those drivers who cannot take—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

1130

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let me see if I've got this straight. When it comes to booze in the province of Ontario, the province is prepared to intervene and find a settlement so that the government can keep on reaping the benefits of selling booze and allowing the public to get what they want from LCBO outlets. But when it comes to public safety and the essentials of being able to get a driver's licence, the province is saying, "No, we're not going to intervene." What's different? If you were able to intervene on the LCBO strike, you should be able to do the same on DriveTest. After all, it is a provincial service. Will you do so?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I say to the member that the NDP, of all parties, should be respecting the collective bargaining process. We respect that process; we trust in that process. We know that it provides the best agreements for parties.

We have taken steps beyond the negotiations and the mediation that we are providing through the Ministry of Transportation. We have taken steps to minimize the impact on drivers and businesses alike. Drivers who require tests now can continue driving until the strike is resolved. The majority of licensed drivers can continue to renew their G licences at ServiceOntario. I encourage all those who want more information to visit our website at the Ministry of Transportation.

We will continue to work with the parties—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ACCESSIBILITY FOR THE DISABLED ACCESSIBILITÉ POUR LES PERSONNES HANDICAPÉES

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: My question is for the Honourable Madeleine Meilleur, the Minister of Community and Social Services. Minister, my constituents and many of my municipal counterparts are coming to me with concerns about budgets that have been stretched. As of January 2010, municipalities, along with public sector organizations, will need to begin complying with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act and,

more specifically, the accessible customer service standard. The private sector, of course, will follow suit in 2012.

My riding, like others, has been hit by the global economic recession. I'm hearing that the full cost of implementing accessibility standards may be a heavy burden to carry. Minister, is there a plan for offsetting accessibility costs?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to my colleague for this excellent question. I want to remind all of us that while some look at accessibility as a cost, others know that it is an opportunity. Accessibility should not be seen as a burden but as a good business practice.

Currently, one in seven Ontarians has a disability. This is expected to rise to one in five in 20 years, so more and more citizens will expect barrier-free environments and services.

Canadians with disabilities have spending power of \$26 billion. This is a market that no business can afford to overlook. Imagine what that spending power will be in—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

M. Shafiq Qadri: Une question supplémentaire : madame la Ministre, je suis d'accord avec vous. Aucune entreprise de ma circonscription ne peut se permettre d'ignorer un pouvoir de dépense de 26 \$ milliards. À mesure que vieillit la population de la génération du « baby boom », il devient de plus en plus crucial de créer une société accessible. Mais les municipalités, y compris celles de ma circonscription, s'inquiètent de leur capacité à rendre leurs collectivités pleinement accessibles d'ici 2025.

Madame la Ministre, que fait exactement le gouvernement McGuinty pour aider les municipalités comme la mienne à mettre en œuvre ce plan d'accessibilité?

L'hon. Madeleine Meilleur: En fait, ils ont le pouvoir de dépenser 26 \$ milliards, ce que nous ne pouvons ignorer parce que présentement, il y a une personne sur sept qui a une forme d'handicap, et dans 20 ans, il y en aura une sur cinq. Alors, à mesure que les gens vieillissent, la population de la génération du « baby boom », il devient de plus en plus crucial de créer une société accessible. Mais les municipalités, y compris celles de ma circonscription, s'inquiètent de leur capacité à rendre leurs collectivités pleinement accessibles d'ici 2025.

L'année dernière, notre premier ministre a annoncé un investissement d'un milliard de dollars dans des projets qui vont améliorer les transports en commun, les routes et les ponts, et d'autres projets municipaux comme l'accessibilité des services municipaux aux personnes handicapées.

Les 1,85 millions d'Ontariens et Ontariennes handicapés sont aussi des contribuables qui ont le droit à accéder aux mêmes services, bâtiments, magasins et emplois—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. The time for question period has ended. This House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1135 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Reza Moridi: It's my pleasure to welcome this afternoon to the House Bruce Bodden, president and CEO of MMM Group Ltd.; Bill Longden, vice-chair of MMM Group Ltd.; David Bannister, past chair, York Central Hospital board of trustees; Janice Bannister; Kathryn Bannister; James Bannister; Warren Collier, chair, York Central Hospital board of trustees; Rodney Webb, board member, York Central Hospital; Jo-anne Marr, acting president and CEO, York Central Hospital; and Melina Cormier, acting chief of communications and public affairs, York Central Hospital.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

MARKDALE HOSPITAL

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the member for London North Centre on her recent appointment and to wish her well in her job as Ontario's new Minister of Health and Long-Term Care.

I would also like to let the new minister know that the residents of Markdale cannot wait any longer for the government to decide on a firm date for the construction of their new hospital. They're ready, Minister.

Six years and four health ministers later, the community of Markdale is no closer to getting a new hospital. As the minister may be aware, the Markdale community fund drive has netted an incredible \$13 million toward the new hospital. The minister's predecessor has given \$3 million toward the planning and design of the new facility. Then, last March, a sign unveiling was held at the future site of the hospital—but still no hospital.

More than 20,000 people rely on the aging Centre Grey hospital. Originally established in the 1940s, it's the only hospital between Owen Sound and Orangeville on the Highway 10 corridor.

The proposed rural health centre would include acute care services, 24-hour emergency services, labs, day surgery, in-patient and outpatient service, and physiotherapy.

So you understand why the Markdale hospital is and will continue to be a major priority for me. I won't rest until the Minister of Health recognizes the need and gives us the go-ahead and support to proceed with detailed planning for the new hospital our community deserves.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Peter Tabuns: I've received communication from one of my constituents that I want to read out to the Legislature. It bears on H1N1 and the lack of preparation on the part of this government for the flu that we're dealing with right now. My constituent writes:

"Yesterday, my wife called Telehealth Ontario to seek advice for my son, who had a raging fever and several

symptoms of the H1N1 virus. She was told it would be a nine-hour wait and she would receive a call back from Telehealth Ontario.

"It has been over 24 hours and still we have not received the promised call back. Emergency rooms are packed; family doctors are overwhelmed; vaccinations are at a standstill. Furthermore, the rollout of the vaccinations has been marred by simple mismanagement from top to bottom."

The constituent writes that he can't understand why health officials haven't enlisted the aid of the network of family doctors to vaccinate those who wish it. He asks why we haven't done as well as other jurisdictions, such as Winnipeg, Manitoba.

He asked that I bring his concerns to those in the Legislature who need to hear them.

This government has not prepared adequately for this flu. It did not recognize that there would be a surge in need for support. It did not make the planning. It has let down the people of this province.

DAVID BANNISTER

Mr. Reza Moridi: I rise here today to recognize the hard work and dedication of David Bannister, past chair of the board of trustees of York Central Hospital in Richmond Hill. He and his wife, Janice, are long-time residents of Richmond Hill and have two lovely children, Kathryn and James.

David's deep commitment and tireless dedication over the past 10 years has made a real difference in helping to make York Central Hospital one of the finest community hospitals in Ontario.

On behalf of residents of my riding of Richmond Hill, I want to offer my sincere thanks to David Bannister for his leadership, dedication and volunteerism, and I wish him a great success in his future endeavours.

David holds a master's of applied science degree in structural engineering and is a partner and vice-president of one of Ontario's major multi-disciplined consulting engineering firms. In 1999, David was first elected as a trustee. Since that time, he has served as chair of the board, vice-chair of the board and the chair of the operations, governance and redevelopment committees. During his tenure as chair of the board of York Central hospital, David also served as chair of the executive committee.

GRAIN FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise today to recognize the great work of the Ontario Soybean Growers and Grain Farmers of Ontario and welcome them to Queen's Park today. As you may know, the Grain Farmers of Ontario is a new organization that has been formed by the merger of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, the Ontario Soybean Growers, and the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board.

Just over two months ago, I was pleased to attend the launch of the Grain Farmers of Ontario brand, which was held in Ingersoll, in the great riding of Oxford. I want to congratulate them on working together so they can ensure that they are delivering a coordinated message on what government can do to help the grain and oilseed producers and on working together to more effectively help the 28,000 farmers who grow corn, soybeans and wheat in Ontario. These farms are an important part of our agriculture industry, and the crops they grow generate over \$2.5 billion in farmgate receipts.

I want to thank the grain farmers and the soybean growers for coming to Queen's Park to update us on the state of their industry and to share the concerns of their farmers. Our leader, Tim Hudak, and I are meeting with them this afternoon, and we are very much looking forward to hearing about their organization's progress and the challenges that their farmers are facing. I hope that all members in this Legislature will make a visit to their reception this evening in committee room 2 to learn more about the new Grain Farmers of Ontario organization and to try some of their soy snacks and beverages. Thank you very much for allowing me to present this statement.

CPR MONTH

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: November is CPR Awareness Month, and we should all take a moment to consider the heroic and selfless efforts that individuals trained in CPR undertake to help people in their most critical hour. CPR is quite literally the difference between life and death, and while it is sad that every person cannot be saved, we must celebrate the many, many who are. Most of all, we must be thankful for those individuals who have given their time and energy to learn or teach this vital skill.

I would like to share a story of a young woman from Ottawa named Kasia. This 17-year-old student was vacationing in Halifax when she saw a stranger collapse. The man had no pulse. It had been two years since Kasia had learned CPR at Ottawa's St. Pius X High School, but she remembered what to do. She began CPR and, with help from another bystander, continued until the ambulance arrived. Thanks to her, that man's life was saved.

Thanks also to ACT Foundation, whose hard work and dedication ensured Kasia had the skills to be that hero. Over 900,000 youth have been trained in CPR to date, as a result of their program. There are generous local sponsors in every community as well as major provincial and national partners that helps ACT to fulfill their mission.

I'm proud that the Ontario government contributed \$650,000 in 2004 to help with the cost of mannequins and, last year, an additional \$1.4 million towards ACT's automated external defibrillator program.

I would also like to recognize the Heart and Stroke Foundation for their dedicated efforts in advocacy, particularly through the Restart a Heart, Restart a Life program.

JOAN KIMBALL

Mr. John O'Toole: It is my privilege to rise today and pay tribute to a leading entrepreneur in my riding of Durham, who was recently featured on the cover of *Active Adult* magazine.

Joan Kimball is the owner of Village Card and Gift Shoppe in Newcastle, Ontario. It has been 15 years since this former manager of a dental office embarked on her own new venture, which has brought to Newcastle the gifts, treasures and collectibles often associated only with big-city boutiques. The article in *Active* included an extensive photo spread of the store's festive giftware. It pointed out the innovation of Joan Kimball. Thanks to the Internet, packages often leave the Village Card and Gift Shoppe for customers around the world.

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Joan keeps up a high profile in the community through appearances on TV shows such as *Rogers' Daytime*. Through special events at the shop, she brings talented artists and artisans to the village of Newcastle.

I would like to pay tribute to Joan Kimball for creating a special store where the spirit of giving lasts all year. Congratulations to Joan and staff.

MARKHAM STOUFFVILLE HOSPITAL

Ms. Helena Jaczek: June 25, 2009, was a red letter day in my riding of Oak Ridges–Markham. Premier McGuinty came to the Markham Stouffville Hospital to announce that the province of Ontario has committed \$35.5 million for the detailed-design stage of the expansion of Markham Stouffville Hospital. The grant will enable the Markham Stouffville Hospital to have shovels in the ground in 2010 and the expansion completed in 2014.

The Markham Stouffville Hospital, led by president and CEO Janet Beed, was built in 1989 to provide health care services to a community of 110,000. However, it currently serves a population of 300,000.

The expansion project includes an addition that will double the size of the hospital facility, and a number of other areas will be updated and renovated, including an improved and expanded ambulatory care centre, a doubled emergency department, an enhanced maternal child centre and a larger mental health centre and diagnostic imaging department.

These improvements will translate into shorter wait times, up to 4,000 childbirths per year, increased access to diagnostic tests, an expanded cardiology program, 100 new additional in-patient beds, eight new operating rooms, increased outpatient service and a child and adolescent day treatment program.

I wish to congratulate the board of directors' executive committee members: Gerard Gervais, Warren Jestin, Mario Belanger, John F.T. Scott and Janet Beed, and all the board of directors' community, medical, government and foundation members.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Our government is working hard to make H1N1 vaccinations available to Ontarians as quickly as possible. So far, we have vaccinated hundreds of thousands of people in Ontario, focusing on those in the high-priority groups.

To ensure even more people are able to receive the vaccine this week, we are doubling the number of clinics administering the vaccine. By end of day Saturday, we hope to have vaccinated more than two million Ontarians.

We also want to ensure that Ontarians are receiving the information they need to protect themselves and their families. All available resources have been put on the phone lines and additional staff have been hired. Ontarians can also contact their local health professionals to get more information on where to get the vaccine, or visit ontario.ca/flu to learn more.

This week, we will focus on the high-priority groups. These groups include our health care workers; pregnant women; healthy children between six months of age and under five years old; anyone under 65 with chronic medical conditions; household contacts of people who cannot be immunized—for example, the parents of an infant under six months of age; and people in remote and isolated areas of the province.

Ontarians who are not among those high-priority groups will be able to roll up their sleeves once high-priority groups have had their chance to be vaccinated and further vaccine becomes available.

As a doctor and public health specialist, I have confidence in the extraordinary efforts being made by our public health experts and want to assure Ontarians that our government will continue to work with our dedicated nurses and health care professionals to ensure every Ontarian who wants this vaccine will be able to protect themselves and their families.

GRAIN FARMERS OF ONTARIO

Mr. Jim Brownell: Today at Queen's Park, our friends from the Grain Farmers of Ontario and the Ontario Soybean Growers are talking about the future of Ontario's economy. The Grain Farmers of Ontario represents Ontario's 28,000 growers of corn, soybeans and wheat. These crops generate over \$2.5 billion in farmgate receipts, resulting in over \$9 billion in economic output, and are responsible for over 40,000 jobs in the province.

The Grain Farmers of Ontario is the province's newest and largest farm commodity group. It represents the merged interests of the Ontario Corn Producers' Association, the Ontario Soybean Growers and the Ontario Wheat Producers' Marketing Board. These three groups have worked closely with the Ontario Farm Products Marketing Commission to carefully seek farmers' input.

As a wonder crop, soybeans produce soy meal and soy oil. Soy oil can be used to replace crude oil and diesel,

creating biodiesel, which helps clean the air and wean ourselves from our dependence on oil.

The Ontario Soybean Growers have even built a demonstration project, a soy house filled with many soy-based products such as fixtures, furniture and foods. The soy house, on view at the Royal Winter Fair in the coming weeks, shows the innovative spirit of the Ontario bioproducts economy, an economy where the entire length of the supply chain is in Ontario, from farmers' fields to our consumers.

Soy continues to be Ontario's largest crop, and I join my colleagues in the Legislature in support of the vital contribution of the entire soy bioproduct industry to our economy. I invite one and all to the Ontario Soybean reception in committee room 2 at 5 p.m. today.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that today the Clerk received the November 3, 2009, report of the Standing Committee on Government Agencies. Pursuant to standing order 108(f)9, the report is deemed to be adopted by the House.

Report deemed adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF BILLS

PUBLIC HOSPITALS AMENDMENT ACT, 2009 LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR LES HÔPITAUX PUBLICS

Mrs. Albanese moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 216, An Act to amend the Public Hospitals Act to require the provision of information sheets to patients / Projet de loi 216, Loi modifiant la Loi sur les hôpitaux publics afin d'exiger la remise de feuilles de renseignements aux malades.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mrs. Laura Albanese: This bill amends the Public Hospitals Act to require the administrator of a hospital to ensure that each patient received at the hospital is given an information sheet setting out information regarding services available at the hospital, services available in the community and other health care options.

PLANNING AMENDMENT ACT (COMMUNITY GARDENS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 MODIFIANT LA LOI SUR L'AMÉNAGEMENT DU TERRITOIRE (JARDINS COMMUNAUTAIRES)

Mr. Ruprecht moved first reading of the following bill:

Bill 217, An Act to amend the Planning Act to promote community gardens / Projet de loi 217, Loi modifiant la Loi sur l'aménagement du territoire afin de promouvoir les jardins communautaires.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

First reading agreed to.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for a short statement.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: This bill will introduce legislation to promote and encourage the creation of community gardens in municipalities right across Ontario. Now, why should we encourage community vegetable gardens?

Interjection: Why?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: Because it will provide green space, and local residents will be able to cultivate flowers and fruits and vegetables—in fact, healthy foods which can be consumed by residents. Community vegetable gardens should be expanded in every municipality right across Ontario.

STATEMENTS BY THE MINISTRY AND RESPONSES

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH MOIS DE LA PRÉVENTION DE LA VIOLENCE FAITE AUX FEMMES

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I rise today to acknowledge November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. This is a month to reaffirm our collective responsibility to end violence against women.

Je pense avec admiration aux femmes que j'ai rencontrées, des femmes qui, ayant vécu la violence familiale, ont pourtant réussi à bâtir une vie meilleure pour elles-mêmes et pour leurs enfants.

Their stories are inspiring and compel us to do more and to do better in preventing woman abuse. Violence against women is unacceptable.

In addition to acknowledging the strength of survivors, I also want to take the time to appreciate the tireless efforts of professionals and organizations that help these women and their children rebuild their lives. They deserve our thanks.

1520

Même si nous faisons beaucoup pour aider les femmes victimes de violence, nous savons que cette violence ne

cessera pas sans les efforts continus et concertés du gouvernement, des collectivités et des personnes.

Communities across Ontario are taking action to end violence against women, and this government has made significant progress in investing in the kinds of community programs that we know are so important to both protect and support women and their children. Last year, we invested \$18.8 million in additional annualized funding for women's shelters and second-stage housing. This funding will give more Ontario women a place to go and obtain services they need to start over.

Our government has increased funding to community-based violence-against-women prevention services by 46% since 2003. In August of 2008, this government announced \$1.5 million for Ontario's 42 domestic violence community coordinating committees, to improve co-ordination among the many agencies that serve victims of domestic violence.

Domestic violence is a serious crime. Last month, part of Ontario's family law reform legislation that strengthens enforcement of restraining orders came into force. These reforms will offer more protection to women who are being abused. Our government has also introduced changes to the Occupational Health and Safety Act which will help to address sexual harassment and domestic violence in the workplace.

Avec l'appui continu du Parlement, nous rendrons les milieux de travail plus sécuritaires pour nos sœurs, filles, amies et voisines.

We know that there's more to do. That's why I am so personally committed to the domestic violence action plan, and that's why we are working closely with our partners in the sector to move ahead with some of the domestic violence advisory council's recommendations. Freedom from violence is a human rights issue.

Dans quelques jours, le 25 novembre marquera la Journée nationale de commémoration et d'action contre la violence faite aux femmes. Partout dans le monde les collectivités renouvelleront leur engagement à en faire plus pour mettre fin à la violence faite aux femmes et pour les droits à la sécurité des filles chez elles et au sein de leur collectivité.

As well, on that day the White Ribbon Campaign in Canada will join 54 other countries in launching its annual 10-day campaign to educate young men and boys about this important issue.

It takes all of us to shut the door on violence. Working together, we can open the door to freedom and dignity for all women.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I rise in the House today to remind all honourable members that this week is Crime Prevention Week in Ontario. This week we celebrate the partnership between law enforcement and the people of Ontario in helping to keep our communities and neighbourhoods safe.

Crime Prevention Week is also a partnership between the government and the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police. Each year we work together to promote crime prevention across the province. This year's theme is: "Prevention Pays—Get Involved. It's Your Community. It's Your Future." It speaks to the impacts that the actions of individuals and families can have on reducing the incidence of overall crime in Ontario.

The most recent crime statistics paint a picture of a continuous reduction in crime in the province. Ontario experienced a 4% decline in overall crime and a 5% decrease in the severity of crime between 2007 and 2008. Violent crimes in Ontario were down 4% last year from 2007; robberies decreased by 5%; serious assaults were down by 5%; break-and-enter crimes were well below the national average, and declined by 9%; motor vehicle thefts in Ontario were also significantly below the national average and declined by 12% from 2007.

These statistics remind us that Ontario is a safe place but that we have work to do to make it even safer. We commend the people who are working to help prevent crime and keep our communities safe, including our police officers, correctional service workers, probation and parole officers, youth and community organizers, parents and teachers, community volunteers and social workers. These are among the thousands of people who work tirelessly to help make Ontario a better place. I am proud to salute them for their efforts and to offer the support and encouragement of the government of Ontario.

This government is backing up these words of support and encouragement with concrete action. We've made significant investments to support enforcement and crime prevention. These include:

- funding to help municipal and First Nations police services hire 2,000 additional police officers;

- working with police services and the OPP to deploy more than 300 additional officers under the federal police officers recruitment fund;

- funding for policing in high-priority areas with the successful Toronto anti-violence intervention strategy and the broader provincial strategy;

- increasing funding to the Centre of Forensic Sciences to expand its capacity to perform scientific testing of bullets, cartridge cases and firearms;

- targeting illicit marijuana grow ops and crystal meth operations;

- hiring additional probation and parole officers for enhanced supervision of guns-and-gangs offenders; and

- protecting children from predators on the Internet.

These are but a few of the McGuinty government's initiatives in our ongoing fight against crime and the causes of crime. The ongoing collaboration of the police, volunteers, parents and the community will help reduce crime and reinforce the sense of security that Ontarians enjoy in their home communities.

The theme of Crime Prevention Week is a reminder that everyone has a part to play in crime prevention. After all, it's our community and it's our future. Again

this year, we've made available, with the collaboration of the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, a home security audit guide to help homeowners identify the steps they need to take to protect their property. It is available for download on our ministry website.

No one group holds a monopoly on crime prevention—not the government, law enforcement, the courts or probation and parole officers. We are all partners in crime prevention, and this is what Crime Prevention Week is all about.

I encourage all members of this House to participate in Crime Prevention Week activities in their host communities and help spread the word that prevention pays. Get involved. It's your community. It's your future. Merci. Thank you. Meegwetch.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Responses?

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to rise on behalf of the Progressive Conservative caucus to respond to the minister's statement.

Since 2005, Ontario has recognized November as Woman Abuse Prevention Month. It's an annual opportunity to raise awareness about violence against women and its prevention.

All women have the right to live in safety and dignity, free from threat, intimidation and violence. Violence against women is never justified.

Unfortunately, violence against women occurs every single day. According to Ontario's domestic violence death review committee, 99 women were killed in domestic incidents between 2002 and 2005, and Statistics Canada indicates that 51% of women have been physically or sexually abused. We have a long way to go before women are safe in our society. Too many tragedies have increased awareness and a need for action.

If the minister and her government are truly committed to preventing violence against women, then they must be prepared to take all the necessary steps, and this includes assisting Ms. Patricia Marshall and her two daughters in St. Catharines. On numerous occasions, the official opposition has asked the Attorney General to assist these women. Yet, despite compelling evidence, including video footage, the crown withdrew its criminal harassment charges. The government's lack of action has dismayed several women's shelters, including Gillian's Place, one of Ontario's first shelters for abused women and children. According to Susanne DiLalla, chair of Gillian's Place, "Not only has this decision caused these women great distress, but it sends a message to all women that this behaviour is acceptable and the justice system will not prevail to protect them."

1530

We must do all we can to ensure that women can walk alone at night without fear and ensure that they are not vulnerable at home or in the workplace or at school.

It's critical that we are familiar with the warning signs of abuse. By understanding these warning signs, we can

help. Victims of abuse cover their bruises, they sometimes use alcohol or drugs to cope with their pain, they may seem nervous around their partner, and victims always seem withdrawn.

The root causes of violence against women are societal, and so the solutions lie ultimately in changing values and behaviours so that the outcome is equality between men and women. Research shows that positive attitudes adopted at an early age can tackle violence before it happens. The government can certainly do more to reduce the rates of violence by fostering resilience and self-esteem amongst girls and young women.

Moving forward, our caucus will do everything in its power to ensure that reducing violence against women and children stays hot on this government's agenda.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I'm very pleased this afternoon to respond to the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services on his comments on Crime Prevention Week. I would like to begin by thanking all of the key stakeholders, particularly groups like the Ontario Association of Chiefs of Police, under the leadership of Chief Dan Parkinson; the Police Association of Ontario, under the leadership of Larry Molyneaux and Ron Middel; and the Ontario Provincial Police Association, under the leadership of President Karl Walsh.

We're very proud of the relationship that the Progressive Conservative caucus has had with the policing community for many, many years now, and look forward to working on an even more collaborative effort in the future.

Obviously, the minister's comments show that some parts of crime are decreasing. However, we must keep in mind that as we look at more difficult economic times, many social programs will be increasing. We've already seen it with the demand on children's aid societies and many social programs. Welfare rates are up, and in many cases, this leads to family disputes and issues that police have to respond to.

Although the government has a large deficit right now—it's almost \$25 billion—I think we have to keep in mind that one area we cannot have any cuts in is the area of policing. We need to have our police services on the roads. We need to have them in our communities. They have to be very, very visible.

Our party will be keeping a close eye on crime prevention and the efforts of this government as we move forward in the future.

WOMAN ABUSE PREVENTION MONTH

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's my honour to rise on behalf of the New Democratic Party and our leader, Andrea Horwath, to respond to the Woman Abuse Prevention Month statement by the minister.

Over 12 years of counselling women trying to escape abuse has taught me that they all ask for four actions on behalf of their government.

(1) What they need to escape an abusive partner is affordable child care. A woman cannot leave her partner unless she has care for her children. We don't have affordable child care in Ontario. We do in Manitoba: \$17 a day. We do in Quebec: \$7 a day. But we don't here in Ontario.

(2) Women who've tried to escape an abusive partner need housing. They need, first of all, temporary shelter housing, and that we don't have in Ontario, either. If you speak to anybody who works in the shelter system, they will tell you there are not enough beds and there's not enough money to accommodate the needs of women escaping abuse. And they need permanent housing. We have 130,000 families in Ontario waiting for affordable housing, many of those women and children.

(3) They need a minimum wage that's above the poverty line, because two thirds of minimum wage earners are women, mainly immigrant women. If women cannot earn a wage that will keep them and their children, they cannot leave an abusive spouse. They need a living wage.

(4) They need pay equity—enforced pay equity—because women in this province make 71 cents to every dollar a man makes. That's shameful after 20 years of legislation, because there's no money to put teeth into that legislation.

I would add to their demands a fifth one, and that is that we need to pass the harassment-and-violence-in-the-workplace law that our leader Andrea Horwath tabled and this government refuses to pass, which would protect women like Lori Dupont and Theresa Vince, who were killed in their workplaces. We need laws that are going to protect women when they go to work, as well as protect them so that they can leave abusive situations at home.

We have a whole month in which this government could act to stop women living with abusive partners and allow them an escape route—one whole month; five simple, simple acts that this government could take. All it takes is political will, but instead, what did we see? We saw a budget that didn't even mention women, that didn't mention women's issues. We don't think women are a priority for this government; neither do women in the province of Ontario. This month is a chance to change all that.

CRIME PREVENTION WEEK

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Interesting; first of all, I want to echo our feelings as a caucus and the positions we have taken in regard to making our community safer. New Democrats understand that we all have a responsibility, in the end, to make sure that our communities are safe, and this week is a good week to remember our collective responsibility—not only police officers and lawmakers and people in the courts, but I think society as a whole—when it comes to making sure that our communities are safer, and I would echo that.

I just want to raise, because we have the opportunity to do this here—there are a few things that we can do, I

think, to make our lives simpler as residents and also, I think, for the police. We met last week, as probably members of the government did, with people from the real estate association. They raised a really interesting point in the meetings that they had with us, and that was the issue of grow ops and meth labs.

One of the things they were arguing, and I think it makes a lot of sense, is that one of things that we can do to facilitate making sure we deal with this so that it's transparent and people know what's going on and they can be well informed, is to make a very simple change to legislation that would say we would register those homes that have been used for grow ops or meth labs on title at the land registry office. That way, a person who's buying a house would know so right up front; there would be no question as to what that particular building was used for, and it would make it very transparent. I thought that was a very good suggestion that the real estate association brought before us and something that I think this government should consider.

I was going to make the point that for years now, the real estate association has been coming before us, asking for this particular change, and for whatever reason the government has decided not to do that. So if this is Crime Prevention Week, we certainly have a way that we can, if we decided as legislators, if the government decided to utilize its majority, put forward an amendment to the acts in order to make sure that we do what we're being asked to do by the real estate association, and that is to register on title those homes that have been used and those properties that were used for either meth labs or grow ops.

It would be a good tool for residents and a good tool for citizens and the police.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly:

"Whereas the residents of Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

"Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore, we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I have signed this and will send it down with Nithya.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

M. Jean-Marc Lalonde: J'ai une pétition qui m'a été livrée par Pierre Carrière d'Embrun. Cette pétition contient au-delà de 1 000 signatures.

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Government Services intends to close or move to another location in the township of Russell the Embrun licence bureau presently located at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Say no to the closure or move of the Embrun licence bureau and say yes to the establishment of an expanded office of ServiceOntario at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell."

1540

HIGHWAY INTERCHANGE

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the community of Waubashene in the township of Tay has two entrances off Highway 400, one of which is the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp ... has had numerous accidents, including fatalities, over the past two decades; and

"Whereas the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp entrance is very confusing and awkward for drivers trying to make left-hand turns onto Highway 12 from either Pine Street or the Highway 400 ramp; and

"Whereas the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay have expressed grave concerns over the safety of the Pine Street-Highway 400 and Highway 12 intersection; and

"Whereas there is a strong feeling in the community that traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection would save lives;

"Therefore we petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario support the Tay community policing committee and the council of the township of Tay and immediately install traffic lights at the Pine Street-Highway 400 ramp and Highway 12 intersection."

I'm pleased to sign this and give it to Rebecca to take to the table.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: It's my pleasure to present a petition from the people of the riding of Sudbury, asking for PET scanning. It goes as follows:

"Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured ... service available" to people under certain conditions; and

"Whereas, by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

"Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

"We ... petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario" as follows: "to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario."

I fully support this petition and will affix my name to it and send it to the clerk with page Madeline.

CHILD CUSTODY

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm pleased to introduce this petition from Grandparents Requesting Access and Dignity. I want to thank Joan Brooks, the president, for providing me with all these petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by" the member from Niagara Falls.

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2) contains a list of matters that a court must consider when determining the best interests of a child. The bill amends that subsection to include a specific reference to the importance of maintaining emotional ties between children and grandparents; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.1) requires a court that is considering custody of or access to a child to give effect to the principle that a child should have as much contact with each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child; and

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just want to take this opportunity to remind the honourable members of an important health and safety issue for our interpreters, and that is the BlackBerrys. If you're going to be speaking,

please—better yet, don't even bring the BlackBerry into the chamber—keep the BlackBerry away from the microphones and do not even keep it in your desk. The vibrations do cause serious irritations to our interpreters. I think it is in the best interests of all of us that we look out for the health and safety of our employees.

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: “To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

“Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that ‘Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them’; and

“Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area.”

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CHILD PROTECTION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: This is a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Whereas Ontario is one of the few provinces that does not have independent oversight of child welfare administration; and

“Whereas eight provinces now have independent oversight of child welfare issues, including child protection; and

“Whereas all provincial Ombudsmen first identified child protection as a priority issue in 1986 and still Ontario does not allow the Ombudsman to investigate people's complaints about children's aid societies' decisions; and

“Whereas people wronged by CAS decisions concerning placement, access, custody or care are not allowed to appeal those decisions to the Ontario Ombudsman's office;

“Therefore, be it resolved that we support the Ombudsman having the power to probe decisions and investigate complaints concerning the province's children's aid societies (CAS).”

I agree with this petition. I've signed it and I send it to the table via page Vladislav.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition that concerns the Ontario budget:

“Whereas a global economic downturn calls for bold and decisive action by the government of Ontario to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

“Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that reduces taxes for individuals and businesses, takes immediate steps to aid small businesses and manufacturers and expands training, literacy and apprenticeship programs; and

“Whereas the province of Ontario, with its export-oriented economy and vibrant small business sector, needs to move past a sales tax system that sees a single sales transaction subject to two separate taxes levied by two levels of government under two separate sets of rules at two different rates and collected by two different bureaucracies;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial and tax reforms ... and in particular implement the proposed single sales tax to enable Ontario to emerge from the current economic downturn in a position to enhance its world-leading position and to attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies that will lead our province forward to a prosperous tomorrow.”

Since I agree, I'm glad to sign this petition.

DOCTOR SHORTAGE

Mr. John O'Toole: I have a number of petitions. I'm not sure which one to actually read, but we'll start with this one.

“Whereas the McGuinty government is conducting a review of the province's underserved area program (UAP) that may result in numerous communities across rural and small-town Ontario losing financial incentives to recruit and retain much-needed doctors; and

“Whereas financial incentives to attract and keep doctors are essential to providing quality front-line health care services, particularly in small communities; and

“Whereas people across Ontario have been forced to pay Dalton McGuinty's now-forgotten health tax since 2004, expecting health care services to be improved rather than cut; and

“Whereas taxpayers deserve good value for their hard-earned money that goes into health care, unlike the

wasteful and abusive spending under the McGuinty Liberals' watch at eHealth Ontario;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government not reduce or eliminate financial incentives rural communities and small towns need to attract and retain doctors."

I'm pleased to present this to Nithya.

1550

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I am pleased to present this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially want to thank Colleen Patterson of Brampton and Kim Dollimore of Vista Drive in my home riding of Mississauga–Streetsville. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita ... funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. Child poverty in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006.... ; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

"That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

I completely agree with this petition, will affix my signature in support of it and ask page Katelyn to carry it for me.

PENSION PLANS

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas several paramedics in Simcoe county had their pensions affected when paramedic services were transferred to the county of Simcoe, as their pensions were not transferred with them from HOOPP and OPTrust to OMERS, meaning they will receive significantly reduced pensions because their transfer did not recognize their years of continuous service; and

"Whereas when these paramedics started with their new employer, the county of Simcoe, their past pensionable years were not recognized because of existing pension legislation; and

"Whereas the government's own Expert Commission on Pensions has recommended that the government move swiftly to address this issue; and

"Whereas the government should recognize this issue as a technicality and not penalize hard-working paramedics;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Finance support Simcoe–Grey MPP Jim Wilson's resolution that calls upon the government to address this issue immediately and ensure that any legislation or regulation allows paramedics in Simcoe county who were affected by the divestment of paramedic services in the 1990s and beyond to transfer their pensions to OMERS from HOOPP or OPTrust."

I agree with this petition and I will sign it.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of Ontarians from the Windsor area, and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

"Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario."

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

YOUTH ACTION ALLIANCE

Mr. Bill Murdoch: I have another petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the Minister of Health Promotion is planning on cancelling funding for the Youth Action Alliance program without looking at its effectiveness in rural Ontario; and

"Whereas the Youth Action Alliance has mobilized youth in the Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound" and Middlesex "area around health issues of importance, including the dangers of smoking, second-hand smoke and illegal cigarettes; and

"Whereas the Youth Action Alliance program is an opportunity for youth in the area to build leadership skills and make valuable contributions to their communities;"

We would like to "ask the Minister of Health Promotion to look at each Youth Action Alliance program on an

individual basis and see if it is working effectively and making a difference in its local community and to continue funding those that are working effectively.”

I'll give it to Nithya, and she will deliver it.

OPPOSITION DAY

HEALTH CARE OVERSIGHT

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I move:

Whereas the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care has an annual budget of almost \$43 billion, the largest of any ministry;

Whereas the Auditor General in his report on the electronic health initiative explicitly said, “Throughout the years, oversight of the EHR initiative has not been effective”;

Whereas the MOHLTC transfers more than \$14 billion to hospitals and almost \$3 billion to long-term-care facilities;

Whereas neither hospitals nor long-term-care facilities are subject to Ombudsman oversight, nor are they covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act; and

Whereas, in a number of other provinces, hospitals and long-term-care facilities are subject to Ombudsman oversight and are covered by freedom-of-information legislation;

That, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should act immediately to ensure that all MOHLTC transfer payment agencies, LHINs and all MOHLTC-funded agencies, boards and commissions are subject to Ombudsman oversight and are covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act.

This is addressed to the Premier of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day number 3. Debate?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my pleasure to kick off the debate on this motion on behalf of my colleagues in the NDP caucus, because we think it's about time that the province of Ontario moves in the right direction when it comes to putting in place proper oversight for our very-much-revered health institutions in this province.

It's tough times like these when government leaders have an added responsibility. When job losses start to pile up, more and more people are struggling. They're struggling to keep a roof over their head; they're struggling to make ends meet; they're struggling to keep their families clothed and fed. Governments have to be there particularly at that time. They have to be there ensuring that every single tax dollar that is collected from the people of this province is spent wisely, is spent with real deference and with real consideration as to the hardships and difficulties that these families go through, still paying their taxes to be able to get the services they need.

Almost half of the provincial budget, almost half of every tax dollar that's sent here by the people of Ontario, is spent on health care—some \$43 billion every year. That's a lot of money, and we have watched, unfortunately, in the last little while the lack of attention that this government has been paying to how those dollars are being spent. In fact, it's true that not only is it the largest single piece of the government's budget, but it also is a piece of the budget that every single year rises. Every single year, there's more money that is spent on health care. And yet, we've had to sit by and watch the billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth unfold right before our eyes. We have watched as health care dollars in this province have been squandered by the current government.

In fact, just today in the Toronto Star is another article indicating another \$236 million, another quarter of a billion dollars, spent on a contract for eHealth. This is after the billion-dollar boondoggle that the auditor talked about in his most recent report. This is after that. We saw another quarter of a billion in today's Star being unveiled.

There is less scrutiny of health care in this province than many other ministries. It's unfathomable that the largest single budget item gets some of the least scrutiny whatsoever in the province of Ontario. Our new Minister of Health has said publicly that she wants to ensure that every health care dollar is spent well. Those are fine intentions. We would agree with that. That's why we have this motion before us today. We think that every single health dollar in this province should be spent well, but good intentions don't go very far. Where's the plan of action, we ask this government? Where is the plan of action to make sure that this is a reality?

We know that this particular health ministry isn't really good at plans of action. We saw this with the unrolling of the H1N1 debacle over the last little while in terms of vaccines, so she's obviously not really good at plans of action. We've laid one out in the motion today. We've laid out a plan of action that could get this government on track in terms of making sure that every single health dollar in this province is wisely spent because it would have the appropriate oversight, and that's what we're looking for in this motion.

It's really worrying that when we talk about the expenditure of health dollars in this province, we hear the minister taking up the same mantra that both of her predecessors took up, because what she says, and what they both said, is that the government is spending more money in health care every year. They're spending more money on this program, they're spending more money on that program, and they think that spending money is actually evidence of good health care. Of course, we've seen that that's not necessarily the truth. It doesn't necessarily follow that the spending of dollars actually translates into quality provision of services.

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The people in this province are paying approximately, on average, by a family measure, \$3,500 annually on

their health care through their taxes. Given this very significant investment, Ontarians have the right to be assured that if they or their loved ones get sick, they are going to actually have access to timely, high-quality and effective care. We believe the government could actually take concrete steps to make sure that happens, concrete steps to make sure that the effectiveness of health care in this province is there, that the quality is there and that the expenditures are being invested in a way that makes sure that the quality is there and the effectiveness is there.

It's fairly simple, and it's outlined in the motion; that is, to make sure the province extends the freedom-of-information coverage that we think it should have, as well as Ombudsman oversight, to all of the transfer payment- and Ministry of Health-funded agencies, boards and commissions—all of the transfer payment agencies that are funded through the Ministry of Health, all of the LHINs, for example, and all of the other agencies, boards and commissions that are funded by the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care.

It's very simple. It's a very simple, a very practical and a very reasonable way to add a level of oversight that needs to occur. We have all seen, in the most drastic of ways over the past several weeks and months, the very important necessity to have that extra layer of oversight, that extra layer of accountability in terms of our expenditures on health dollars.

At present it's very unfortunate, and it's like so many other areas where, unfortunately, this province is at the back of the pack. I know my friend Rosario Marchese, the critic for education, will tell you it's the same in the education system, with post-secondary funding particularly: back of the pack. It's the same with oversight for children's aid societies: We're at the back of the pack. And so here we are again when it comes to oversight of our single largest budget item, the most important programs that the people of this province not only fund but rely upon and the ones that they value the greatest, which is their health care programs. And yet Ontario is at the back of the pack because we do not have Ombudsman oversight in health care, we do not have Ombudsman oversight in hospitals, in long-term-care facilities or in any of the other transfer payment agencies. We're at the back of the pack. Other provinces have done this. Other provinces have done this long ago.

It's the same with freedom of information. Other provinces have also already extended the freedom-of-information and protection-of-privacy laws into their health care system. I don't understand why this government does not believe that the people of this province deserve exactly the same kind of expectation, which is to be able to have their Ombudsman do this and to be able to have the freedom-of-information laws applied to this section of their programs, frankly—of their budget, certainly.

The reality is that in Quebec, in Alberta, in Nova Scotia and in Newfoundland, all of those places have their nursing homes and their long-term-care facilities with the oversight of their ombudsman. In 2008-09, the

number of complaints here in Ontario to our Ombudsman about health care doubled over the previous year, so we know that the people of Ontario want this service. They're already calling the Ombudsman's office. They are already asking the Ombudsman to investigate complaints and concerns with health. It doubled to 532 complaints. These were serious complaints. These were complaints concerning people dying of *C. difficile* and influenza due to poor infection control in our hospitals.

I come from Hamilton. We watched as our neighbours in Burlington at Joseph Brant hospital went through the horrifying experience of seeing their loved ones die from a very painful and very debilitating kind of illness when they ended up with *C. difficile*. In fact, the Hamilton Spectator spent many an issue of their newspaper going through all kinds of horrifying stories of the deaths that were happening due to *C. difficile* here in the province of Ontario. The Ombudsman was called upon by so many people to try to get to the bottom of what was happening there, but of course the Ombudsman would have to turn those people away, because in Ontario the Ombudsman has no oversight into what's happening in hospitals. He could do nothing. In fact, some 2,366 complaints had to be turned away by the Ombudsman because they involved either municipalities, universities, school boards, hospitals, long-term-care homes, children's aid societies or police.

In fact, New Democrats have been at the front edge of this particular initiative. I, my colleague Rosario Marchese and my colleague France Gélinas have all put in private members' bills calling on the government to expand Ombudsman oversight, particularly to the MUSH sector: municipalities, universities, school boards, hospitals—and, of course, long-term care and CASSs.

People have a right to know what's happening, and we have seen that this government has been incapable of providing that level of confidence in terms of their internal mechanisms for oversight and accountability. That is why these other mechanisms are so, so important for people: to make sure that they can regain confidence.

What does the Ombudsman do particularly? The Ombudsman has the role of going through these agencies and these organizations with the view of finding what some of the systemic problems might be. And I'm telling you, if there isn't an example of systemic problems and if it isn't in the Ministry of Health and if it wasn't with the eHealth scandal, I don't know what is. If there's one particular issue that points very clearly to why this government should bring Ombudsman oversight into the health care sector, it has got to be eHealth.

The Ombudsman of Ontario himself, André Marin, has been extremely vocal about his desire to open up this particular area to his scrutiny. He has been very clearly asking this government to give him the authority to have oversight into the hospital system, into the long-term-care system, into the health care system overall. In fact, during the *C. difficile* tragedy, this is what the Ombudsman said: "This is exactly the kind of systemic issue which our office would be poised to handle if we had jurisdiction"—if he had jurisdiction.

But it's not just the Ombudsman who is calling for oversight and it's not just the New Democrats who have been calling for oversight of the health care system. In August 2005, the McGuinty government's own Seniors' Secretariat seniors' advisory committee on long-term care recommended the appointment of a seniors' Ombudsman for long-term-care residents in a letter to Minister Smitherman. The members of the advisory committee stated, "We feel the current system, which relies solely on government staff, is simply not responsive enough to ensure seniors' rights are protected in an objective and fair fashion."

In October 2005, the Royal Canadian Legion, Ontario command veterans chastised the McGuinty Liberals for breaking a promise made by Minister of Health and Long-Term Care George Smitherman, the one I just recounted.

There are people from all quarters who are calling on this government to open up the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care, particularly to the Ombudsman and particularly to the FOI process.

I wanted to read one more specific quote from someone who is calling for the same thing, and then I know I have members of my caucus who are very interested in speaking to this issue as well, so I'm going to do that and I'm going to leave the rest of the comments for them to cover off. This one is from OPSEU president Smokey Thomas:

"It's scandalous that at a time when the health care system is being squeezed for every last dime ... the Ministry of Health is deflecting public disclosure by spending millions of dollars in executive salaries and benefits through the back door of publicly supported hospitals.

"This says to me it's time for real public scrutiny, including an expanded role for the Ontario auditor and the opening of hospitals to the freedom-of-information commissioner and the Ombudsman.

"This kind of secrecy with the taxpayers' dollar is unacceptable, and it makes you wonder what else they're hiding."

Mr. Thomas was speaking particularly of the salary of the deputy minister, Ron Sapsford, who is being paid through the back door, through the budget of the Hamilton Health Sciences Corp., a hospital system in my own community.

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It's outrageous that these kinds of things continue to happen while this government crows day in and day out about accountability and about transparency. They are doing nothing to get the utmost level of transparency and accountability, because the utmost level of transparency and accountability comes with the oversight of the Ombudsman, and it comes with the FOI process being expanded to the hospital sector.

New Democrats are asking everyone in this chamber, as members of provincial Parliament who represent people in your ridings, to support this motion. It is the right thing to do. It is time that Ontario gets with the

program and catches up with the rest of this country in terms of provincial responsibility and in terms of making sure that the residents of this province get the same kind of oversight, the same kind of accountability and the same kind of transparency as everybody else in this country gets when it comes to their health care dollars.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

M^{me} France Gélinas: It is my pleasure to rise to talk about this motion. I would start by talking about Bill 89, a bill that I introduced on June 5, 2008, and it reads as follows: An Act to amend the Ombudsman Act with respect to hospitals and long-term care facilities. Basically, what this act wants to do is allow the Ombudsman to investigate complaints coming from hospitals or long-term-care facilities.

We all do work in our constituency offices. I'm sure all 107 of us have been faced with a family member who came to see us at our constituency office and talked about a health outcome gone bad, either at a hospital or at a long-term-care home. It is true that every hospital in this province and every long-term-care home has a way to handle complaints, so most of those people who come to see you will have gone through the process at their local hospital, at their local long-term-care home, to try to address their issue.

But if the problem is not solved, they turn to the Ombudsman, because this is a neutral third party who is there to investigate people's complaints. Then, much to their surprise, they find out that the Ombudsman cannot hear their complaints because he is not allowed to investigate complaints coming from hospitals or long-term-care homes. So they go to their MPP's office, and seriously, there's very little else we can do. We can help them along, but the way to help all of those people is to make sure that the Ombudsman, this third-party independent officer, can investigate their complaints.

Most of the complaints that are one-person complaints can be handled by the hospital or the long-term-care facility. But there are systemic complaints that come forward, and this is where the Ombudsman really shines. This is where his office's investigative ability really not only gets to the bottom of what caused the problem, but also brings forward solutions: solutions to make our health care system, our hospitals and our long-term care better. Better care, more accountable: At the end of the day, everybody wins.

I wanted to come back to what happened at Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital—that was referred to by my leader—which was faced with C. difficile. Basically, 62 patients of Joseph Brant Memorial Hospital died from the C. difficile superbug during an extended period of time—it was actually during a period of 20 months—and 115 other people were sick. A total of 264 people died throughout Ontario.

During this period of many months, people complained to the hospital; people complained to the Ombudsman. Much could have been done to change the outcome for family members in months 15, 16, 17 and

20, but the Ombudsman could not do anything. He was not allowed to investigate, so the problem was allowed to continue unchallenged because nobody knew.

You have to realize that when you watch a loved one die of *C. difficile*, it is an extremely undignified way to die. This is as close to “death of a thousand screams” as you have ever seen. People have diarrhea non-stop, and hospital workers do everything they can to help, but there is so little we can do. Prevention is the key, and prevention could have come sooner to hundreds of Ontarians who died from *C. difficile* and other hospital-acquired diseases if we had let the Ombudsman investigate the cases that came forward.

But we don't have this in Ontario. Every other province, every other jurisdiction in Canada has recognized its value. The hospital association wants Ombudsman oversight because they realize that the Ombudsman is able to investigate systemic issues that will help them in the long run. They realize that for some of the complaints that come in, there is very little that they're able to do at the local level.

But things could be different in this province; care could be better. At the end of the day, some of those people might not have died had we passed Bill 89, the bill that would have allowed the Ombudsman oversight of hospitals and long-term-care facilities.

There's an opportunity here today to move this idea forward, and I hope that everybody in this House will realize that it is in the best interests of the people of Ontario, it is in the best interests of the health care providers of Ontario and it is in the best interests of hospital and long-term-care administrators to let the Ombudsman do investigations. It will move us forward and it is the right thing to do.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Zimmer: I'm pleased to speak to this matter. First of all, let me just say that I have read over the motion in detail, and the premise of the motion that cites that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care budget is \$43 billion. It goes on to say elsewhere in the motion that the Ministry of Health transfers \$14 billion to hospitals and \$3 billion to long-term-care facilities. The motion, in effect, says that because of those enormous expenditures and so on, the solution to monitoring or oversight of those expenditures is the Ombudsman. That confuses the role of the Ombudsman and the Auditor General. The Ombudsman's role is to assist individual citizens with particular complaints arising out of government activities in Ontario. That's a very specific and a very narrow mandate. On the other hand, the responsibility of the Auditor General is to conduct value-for-money audits, to do financial audits and the like. The mandate of the Auditor General fits in with the premise of the motion dealing with the \$43-billion health budget and all of that sort of thing.

Typically, an Ombudsman is a lawyer who has experience in focusing in on those narrower individual complaints, while the Auditor General, on the other hand—

and this is the situation for our Auditor General here in Ontario—is a very experienced and senior accountant who has a staff of very experienced accountants that he works with. They are specifically trained to do these large, systemic, value-for-money audits, to examine financial statements, to do forensic accounting—all of those sorts of things.

That's not the skill set that the Ombudsman has. He has another skill set. The Auditor General's skill set is, as I've said, one of an accounting function, and clearly the premise of the opposition day motion is that because of these enormous budget expenditures of the Ministry of Health—almost 50% of the Ontario budget, \$43 billion—you need someone there to keep an eye on that, someone with the skills of an auditor and the auditor's staff, hence our Auditor General's staff. Going into the Ministry of Health, the auditor is faced with incredibly complex fiscal arrangements, accounting practices and financial activities. Only the skill set that an Auditor General has would result in any sort of meaningful review.

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We already have an Auditor General in place, a very skilled Auditor General with a very skilled staff. If anybody thinks that our Auditor General is anything less than extremely competent and extremely skilled and if anybody thinks that our Auditor General is going to be put off the track, you just to have witness his report on eHealth. What he did on eHealth was, he dug into the numbers and he did his value-for-money audit. When he wasn't getting the answers he felt that he should have had, he brought certain pressures to bear. He dug in and he carried out an audit. That's the very function of the Auditor General; that's not a function that the Ombudsman is mandated for or trained to effect.

We already have a system in place that achieves the very end that the opposition motion is trying to get to; that is, some sort of oversight of this enormous \$43-billion budget expenditure. If there's any doubt that the Auditor General is equipped to best deal with the matters that the member from Hamilton Centre has raised in her opposition motion, as I've said, you just have to consult the work he has done over the years on any collection of matters.

I sit in the public accounts committee and I have seen with my own eyes, as have the other members of the public accounts committee, the focus, the drive and the competence of the Auditor General. Ontario's Auditor General is not going to be put off. He will oversee these large budget expenditures. He will do the value-for-money audit. That's the auditor's function; it's not the function of the Ombudsman. The Ombudsman's function is a narrower one: individual complaints from individual citizens in Ontario.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Jim Wilson: I'm pleased to join the debate on this motion, which calls for more accountability in our health care system. It's a timely motion put forward by the NDP, one that arises out of the frustration that

Ontarians feel having watched this government spend us into record deficits while also allowing millions—and, in some cases, a billion—of tax dollars to be siphoned off to untendered contracts to wealthy Liberal consultants.

Just look at the mess at eHealth. Everyone watching this House today remembers it. EHealth is where your taxpayer money goes to die: hundreds of millions of dollars spent and nothing to show for it but some very happy Liberal consultants.

By now, everyone has heard of the eHealth stories: contracting gone wild, expense accounts out of control, and no supervision or responsibility for Premier McGuinty and his crew. With \$1 billion misspent on a network of Liberal friends and insiders, what is needed is a public inquiry to answer the questions the Auditor General couldn't address in the scope of his work, and we need today's motion to pass to provide accountability concerning the government's actions in these areas.

While the auditor suggests that there may have been deliberate collusion and bid-rigging at eHealth, we still don't know the Liberal affiliations of all the individuals involved in the scandal and we don't have any idea which individuals saw personal financial gain—although some must have. All of that falls outside of the mandate of the Auditor General. The only action that can answer those questions is to have a full public inquiry.

An inquiry would also answer the questions that are swirling around other members of the cabinet and their role in this scandal, particularly the Minister of Energy and Infrastructure, George Smitherman. We know that Mr. Smitherman was in charge of eHealth for five years as health minister. That amounts to 78%, or \$887 million, of the billion-dollar boondoggle. David Caplan, on the other hand, was only responsible for eHealth for one year as health minister, or 22% of the time, wasting \$240 million. So the guy who was assigned to waste \$887 million got to keep his job, and the guy responsible for wasting \$240 million—well, he gets fired. It doesn't make a lot of sense.

Think of this: We all remember the federal sponsorship scandal and subsequent Gomery inquiry. That Liberal program allowed \$100 million to be flushed down the toilet, with, as we learned, brown envelopes filled with cash passed over the dinner table. In fact, people are in jail today because of that scandal, and yet the McGuinty Liberals allowed \$1 billion to disappear—10 times as much money as was involved in the Gomery inquiry—with no police investigation and no public inquiry to find out how it happened, who was responsible or who gained financially.

The government must restore the public trust and confidence it has to have in order to govern. At eHealth, you have a bunch of Liberal appointees running around the organization like a personal fiefdom: contracts for all of their friends and all of their friends' friends; contracts to consult with each other and read the newspaper on the subway; and permission to send taxpayers the bill for every drink, doughnut and paperclip. What a complete shamble it has proven to be, and what a failure of leader-

ship and oversight to let this go on for months and months while refusing to allow an independent probe into the matter. This, at a time when Ontario families are working longer and harder to meet their basic needs. For them to see this government funnelling hundreds of millions of taxpayer dollars to consultants through sweetheart deals and untendered contracts is nothing less than a dishonour to taxpayers who contribute their hard-earned wages to the provincial treasury.

The eye-opening facts at eHealth would never have seen the light of day had the Progressive Conservative caucus not filed the freedom-of-information requests for information on the spending habits at these government agencies—and that pertains to today's motion. There's no doubt that the government would have rather swept all of this under the rug, which gives us a compelling reason to support this motion today. The key principle in the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act is that government information should be available to the public.

The reason we're here today? In Ontario, there are—get this—nearly 630 agencies, boards and commissions that employ, on either a part-time or full-time basis, almost 4,300 people. These bodies range from Agricorp, the crop insurance agency, to the Building Code Commission, the Consent and Capacity Board, Fire Safety Commission, the Lake Simcoe science committee, the Landlord and Tenant Board, and the list goes on and on—all the way to things like the Niagara Parks Commission and through to the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board.

The Ministry of Health oversees one of largest contingents of these agencies, boards and commissions. I counted a total of 103 at this ministry alone. These range from bodies like Cancer Care Ontario to the pharmacy council, the Ontario Mental Health Foundation, and the Transitional Council of the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine Practitioners and Acupuncturists of Ontario. Quite frankly, I'm astonished at how big government has been allowed to get. There's a department, a board, an agency or a special commission for just about everything.

At health, much of the \$40 billion or so that is spent every year on health care in Ontario is now funnelled through 14 local health integration networks, none of which are subject to freedom-of-information laws. That amounts to roughly \$14 billion in spending that doesn't fall under the purview of the freedom-of-information act or any oversight by the Ombudsman. And then there's another \$3 billion or so spent at long-term-care facilities with the same lack of oversight.

We know that the Ombudsman has asked for the authority to review these institutions. On June 17, 2008, he issued a release that said that some of these entities "have become almost a law unto themselves. They have carved themselves a nice, comfortable niche—a zone of immunity against oversight."

In 2007, the Ombudsman was quoted in the Toronto Star as saying, "The government talks a storm about

oversights, supports, checks and balances and so on. But, considering Ontario, especially Toronto, is the economic heart of the country—this is a thriving province—we pride ourselves on setting standards for the country. We do very poorly in independent oversight.”

In my research and innovation critic portfolio we asked for information recently on the spending at Ontario’s centres of excellence, and we were declined since the tens of millions of dollars that taxpayers send to those centres don’t fall under the authority of the freedom-of-information act. So there’s no real way to tell if those arm’s-length bodies are spending their allotted tax dollars in the same way as eHealth chose to spend theirs.

In my colleges and universities critic portfolio, we see much of the same. Universities are not subject to oversight by the Ombudsman. A small handful of universities have their own internal ombudsman, but the majority of them don’t. This is something that I know the Canadian Federation of Students has called for. In fact, they passed a motion that was proposed by the Continuing Education Students’ Association of Ryerson University urging the government to move on this.

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In light of recent revelations of gross misspending at eHealth, Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp., the Workplace Safety and Insurance Board, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., and many others that I’m sure we haven’t heard of yet, I support this motion, and I urge my colleagues on all sides of the House to do so too. We know that this government has failed miserably in protecting the public purse and the public interest, and so if they won’t do it, as is their job, it’s left to the opposition and the third party to fill the void, because we just can’t trust the government to protect the taxpayer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I take this issue very personally. You see, my uncle died of C. difficile, and my cousin Linda Del Grande, his daughter—his name is Tony Del Grande—came down to Queen’s Park. She’s not a political person. She was a teacher for all of her life with the Catholic school board. Her father, a beloved member of the family, went into hospital for a simple procedure and then died a terrifying death, a death that you heard our health critic, France Gélinas, describe, oh, too clearly. She had to witness her father die from a hideous death that even a dog owner would not want to see their pet die from.

She phoned me because she knew that I was a member of this Legislature, and she said: “I went to the board of directors of the hospital. They didn’t say anything. They didn’t respond to me. I read about C. difficile in the paper. I put one and one together, and came up with the answer that this is what he died from.” She had a very difficult time even getting a straight answer that this was in fact the diagnosis.

She said, “Who can I complain to? Because clearly, as a concerned citizen and as a loving daughter, I would like

to make it impossible that this would ever happen to anyone else and their loved one, or at least get answers about death of my father.” So she came here, and we had a press conference around this very issue, the deaths that were caused by C. difficile and the difficulty this assembly had in getting to the bottom of the that: how many deaths, where, how they could have been prevented and why they weren’t prevented.

Imagine, if you can, the office of André Marin and the complaints, over 2,000 complaints that that office receives about this exact situation—imagine. Imagine answering the phone to a daughter who has lost a beloved father and having to say, “I’m sorry; I can’t help you. I have no oversight capacity.” And then, when they ask you the next question, of course the next question will be, “Well, who has?” and they say, “Well, the government,” this assembly. We’re the only ones, and we know the track record of governments, and quite frankly any government, of investigating its own.

The member from Willowdale talked about the Auditor General’s role and how the Auditor General should play this role, but that’s absurd. It’s not the Auditor General’s role to respond to the kind of complaint my cousin had. In fact, there’s no way she could have phoned the Auditor General. The Auditor General is put into motion by this assembly, by a committee of this assembly, and we know that on every committee of this assembly, the government has the majority membership. Again, what you’re asking is the government to investigate itself.

No democracy should be sitting with oversight over this kind of sector. We’re talking about all of the MUSH sector but, particularly in terms of this motion that Andrea Horwath, our leader, has put forward today, particularly over the single-largest line item in the budget, and that is health. Certainly the track record of this government, as many members have stood and spoken about, is not conducive to trusting this government to investigate itself, not when you look at the eHealth scandal, but we could continue: the OLG scandal, other scandals—again, outside of the purview of oversight of any sort, really. Only because the press picked up on it, only because FOIs could be done, did this information about eHealth come to light. And even then, the response from the government has been minimal in terms of doing anything about it.

The Progressive Conservatives asked for an inquiry—nothing wrong with that. But what’s really needed here is something long-term and ongoing, and that is the response to all of our constituents: their democratic right, I would put forward, to be able to take a complaint of this order—the death of a loved one—and see it through so that the same thing doesn’t happen to someone else.

We deny that to our citizens—all of them. The question is the one that we heard from Smokey Thomas. We heard the question: What are they hiding? Why won’t they do it? It’s a very simple step, a step that every other province and every other jurisdiction across Canada has made. Every other province has ombudsman oversight of their health care sector except this one. The question really is why. What are they hiding?

From lifting up just one little rock, we saw the eHealth scandal emerge. Imagine if the Ombudsman had oversight over all of the health spending. What would we find then? That's the question.

This does not inspire confidence; it inspires exactly the reverse. And for people like my cousin, who was not politically motivated, who simply wanted an answer about her father's death and couldn't get one, that does not inspire trust in her or anyone who knew my uncle, or anyone who knew anyone who died from C. difficile or any of the other calamities that befall our health care system from time to time.

Where do they go? Who do they ask? The answer in this government is: no one. There is no one to go to and no one to ask, except here, and that's why we brought forward this motion.

For the life of me, I cannot understand why the government has a problem with it. I cannot understand how each one of the members on the opposite side can go back into their constituency offices and actually justify what they do here and justify how they're denying oversight of the largest line item in the budget—and people's lives. It's not just about the money; it's about people's lives. How do they justify that to their constituents?

I'm going to leave some time for others of my colleagues, but suffice to say that I want to dedicate this to the memory of Tony Del Grande and to his family, and to say that, sadly, we're no closer to finding an answer and we're no closer to Ombudsman oversight than we were before that death occurred. I don't sense that we're not going to be any closer until after 2011. I hope that by then we're a lot closer.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Bill Mauro: I appreciate having a few minutes this afternoon to speak on the motion before us today.

What I intended to do was pick up on a theme that has already been started by our member who spoke first for us on this topic, the member from Willowdale. He was talking about the particular structure of the motion that's before us. I'm sure that all of us here today have taken the time to read it, and if you do read it, I think it speaks to two things: One is the finances, or the amount of money, that is invested and spent on health care in the province of Ontario; and the other is what we can do here in Ontario to make this situation more transparent and more accountable, the implication being that currently it is not.

Where our first speaker, the member from Willowdale, went was where I intended to go on this particular topic as well. They list in their motion the fact that the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care currently has an annual budget of \$43 billion. The third paragraph of the motion goes on to speak to the amount of that \$43 billion that goes into the hospital sector, which is \$14 billion. Out of that \$14 billion, \$3 billion goes to long-term-care homes.

Out of this amount of money, we can see that—well, it doesn't really matter what the amount of money would

be, in terms of the totality of it. We know that we spend a tremendous amount of money on health care in the province of Ontario.

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The question very clearly becomes: Who is the best person, who is best positioned, to monitor and ensure that there's transparency and accountability for oversight when it comes to that quantum of resource that's invested by the taxpayers of Ontario?

I don't think there's any debate that can be had or an argument that could be put forward to suggest that the Auditor General is not in fact the very best person to ensure that that money is being spent in the best way possible on behalf of the taxpayers in the province of Ontario. That's exactly what he has done, and he has done that because we've allowed him to do that.

I was listening earlier when the member for the official opposition spoke. He spoke for eight or 10 minutes, and he spoke, I think it's fair to say, a bit passionately in favour of this motion that's before us today from the third party. But it was a bit interesting to sit here and listen to the official opposition speak to being in support of a motion like this and being quite critical insofar as their comments about what our government has done to this point when it comes to transparency and accountability, when it comes to a variety of issues in the province.

The obvious retort back to the members of the official opposition, of course, is that in the very recent history of this province, they had eight years in which they could have done exactly the same thing. They were in government from 1995 to 2003 and, for reasons known only to them, chose not to do this.

It's important to link back to the fact that eHealth did not start with our government. It was called something different. It started under the previous administration, when the Conservatives were the government. I think it began in 2001 or 2002. It was called Smart Systems for Health at that time, before it became eHealth.

So there was an opportunity for the official opposition, had they seen fit, from 1995 to 2003, to invoke multiple layers of transparency when it came to not only the health care budget but a variety of other issues, agencies, boards and commissions, as well as ministries within the province of Ontario, and they chose not to do that. Not only did they choose not to do it; they imposed initiatives and measures that we were bringing in in our time in government.

We brought in FOI ability when it came to Hydro One, OPG, municipal hydroelectric commission utilities, universities and hospitals—those endeavours and measures were opposed by the official opposition. So it was a bit interesting for me to listen to the official opposition speak to this issue, given that they were responsible for perhaps the least transparent act ever undertaken in the province of Ontario, one that went down in history, called the Magna budget. We all remember where that landed, and I think we discovered after the election of our government in 2003 why, in fact, that budget was

presented for the first time in the history of the province outside of the Legislative Assembly.

I think it's important to note a couple of other things when it comes to the eHealth piece in this particular debate today. The Auditor General investigated this very thoroughly—\$43 billion, a significant portion of which is attached to the eHealth piece—and he spoke very clearly in his report: No evidence of political wrongdoing was found during his deliberations.

The Auditor General is an independent officer of this Legislative Assembly. He does not report back to the government; he reports back to the Legislative Assembly. He says and does exactly what he thinks he needs to do on behalf of the taxpayers of the province of Ontario. He came back and said that in his mind, in his and his staff's report, there was no evidence of any political wrongdoing.

As I said, we keep hearing the same theme of \$1 billion being wasted. Of course, that's completely misrepresenting what has happened on this file since 2001 or 2002, when it began. As I said earlier, it began as something that was called Smart Systems for Health under the previous administration, and up till now we've been dealing with it for, I guess, seven or eight years. We know that there are thousands of doctors now online and hundreds of thousands of patients who now have electronic health records. So to suggest and continue to repeat for the people of the province of Ontario that there has been no movement on the file, I think, is a pretty gross misrepresentation.

What we have said very clearly on this side of the House is that the yardsticks should be farther forward at this point than they already are. Everybody who has spoken on this file has said that. The Premier has been very clear on that. Nobody is suggesting that enough good work has been done to this point—and that more needs to be done. I don't think anybody is arguing that. In fact that is why, as a government, we have accepted very clearly, and stated so in this House, all of the recommendations that the Auditor General has put forward.

I want to close—my time is almost up. We're splitting ours here amongst five or six speakers on our side of the House.

I've had the opportunity to deal with issues when it comes to public tendering in a previous life where I worked for about 15 years, where I actually pulled together public tenders. When we did that and put them out—of course, I was not dealing with the amounts of money that we're talking about here, but I would suggest that, for the area where I was working, the amounts of money were significant. We had very clear spending guidelines and rules around how that money could be spent when it came to sole-sourcing, when you had dollar values under which you would need three verbal quotes, and then, beyond that, where you would go to a public tendering process. We followed those rules to the letter. Those rules here need to be followed in our agencies, boards and commissions and in all direct-funded min-

istries as well. Nobody's suggesting anything to the contrary. When those rules are in place and people don't follow those rules, there need to be consequences, and I think we've spoken very clearly to that.

My time is up. I will close by saying that as a government, over the last six years, when it comes to transparency and accountability, we have in fact moved the yardsticks forward, but as the Premier likes to say, there is always more work to be done.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: You don't know whether to laugh or cry after that last submission with respect to accountability of the McGuinty government. Of course, we are supporting the motion today put forward by the third party, the NDP.

I think a lot of our support is certainly driven by the response of this government to the eHealth scandal, the billion-dollar boondoggle, the fact that so much taxpayers' money was wasted, when this government is now looking at a \$25-billion deficit and we see all sorts of constraints and cutbacks in the health care system across this province.

What have we seen with respect to eHealth? The member talked about transparency. Well, we know what happened when the public accounts committee, which wanted to have an opportunity to talk to the principals very much involved, the key players in the eHealth scandal, Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson. This seems to me to be an eminently reasonable request, that we have those individuals, whose names were prominently featured in the Auditor General's report on eHealth, come before the committee, explain how this all evolved, what their role was, what the role of the government was, the Premier's office, the Minister of Health and other players in the situation. What was the reaction of the government members with respect to that, Madam Speaker? You know, I know and everyone in this Legislature knows: The government majority refused to allow those individuals to appear and explain the roles they played in that enormous loss of tax dollars, \$1 billion.

The other element here, of course, is that they have complete disdain on the Liberal benches across the way for the current Ombudsman, André Marin. You can see it when Mr. Marin's name is raised in this place: the grimaces, the facial expressions, the body language. They do not like this man, and they do not like him because he is so dynamic and gets his teeth into an issue. We saw it with Ontario Lottery and Gaming, what he did there to expose the botch-up in that crown corporation, the fact that an innocent Ontarian was being ripped off. We have to give André Marin a lot of credit for having that ability to go in. He's not intimidated by this government. He's not intimidated by their ministers. He's not driven by their ministers or their backbenchers. He's driven by what's right for this province and what's wrong with an agency of the government and how it's impacting the hard-working taxpayers of this province.

That's the reality. They do not like that. They, in fact, I think in many ways, despise it, and despise the in-

dividual who can use very colourful language, on occasion, to describe what he sees are the failings of this government.

Interjections.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: We have interjections here now with respect to this. They just don't like this man. They're afraid of him, and they're afraid to give him the additional authority that other provinces have given to their ombudspersons to go in and look at the health care sector.

They want to interject with inane commentary. We're talking about a mess here, a billion-dollar mess that is in their laps. What do they want to do? They do not want a public inquiry—forget about that—in spite of how, every time it rained when they were sitting in the opposition benches, they wanted a public inquiry. Now we have lost \$1 billion and there's no need for one. They will not even allow a standing committee of this Legislature to talk to the key players involved in this horrible, horrible scandal and horrible, horrible loss of tax dollars.

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The backbenchers sit over there mute, or they get up and read their lines prepared by the Premier's office, which is telling them what to say. They're not standing up and fighting for the interests of taxpayers in their ridings or fighting against the health care cutbacks in their ridings—no. They are doing what their masters tell them to do from the corner office. It's shameful.

André Marin was cut from the same piece of cloth as the original Ombudsman in this province, Arthur Maloney. He set the standard, and we have not had an Ombudsman in that office who even approached it up until André Marin. He's doing a terrific job. We should let him go into this area and really shine a light on what's happening in the health care sector. This is the right thing to do. Liberal members should have enough gumption to stand up and do the right thing instead of simply standing up here and echoing what their Premier says they should say. That's all we hear.

The member who got up previously said he was surprised to hear his colleague speak to an issue that he was going to speak to. Give me a break. They have their speaking notes. They have their speaking notes provided by the Premier and they follow them to a T. It's a shameful display.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Paul Miller: I'll start off by saying that it is shocking to me that any government agency receiving taxpayers' money is not subject to significant oversight and how irresponsible it is that the access to information to these agencies is not given.

The largest portion of the provincial budget goes to health care, either directly to the ministry or through it to various agencies, boards and commissions that it has set up to deliver its programs. Although the government claims an arm's-length relationship with its ABCs, it has a direct relationship that should be completely open to public scrutiny and oversight.

The scandals of the past six months have really brought to light this missing link and the need for scrutiny of the spending of our hard-earned tax dollars, and have created grave concern among Ontarians, particularly when they face an increased hit in their tax dollars with this horrible, harmful and hated HST. If this government really wanted to ensure that Ontarians were receiving full value for their tax dollars, they would all be sitting across the floor ready to vote in favour of this NDP motion.

It is clear that the NDP is on the right track with this motion. Even the Ombudsman has called for oversight in these areas. The Information and Privacy Commissioner has followed suit, calling for these various organizations to be subject to freedom-of-information legislation.

It is very clear to me and to many residents of Hamilton and the Niagara region that the Ombudsman's oversight, with the help of appropriate access-to-information legislation, would have been crucial in resolving the flawed competitive bidding process that the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brant LHIN embarked on a couple of years ago.

When issues like this are raised in the House, the first response from the McGuinty Liberals is that the agencies are arm's-length, so they have no responsibility. Horse feathers. This government uses its majority on all committees to ensure that it moves its agenda. It appoints whomever it wants to these various LHIN boards—and I've read the resumé highlights, folks; they are clearly political appointments—and then it claims no responsibility for the actions of these ABCs. At least with the Ombudsman's oversight, we would have independent action to ensure that these ABCs are implementing this legislation and the regulations and not following a political agenda that is headed up by marching orders.

This government always refers to the Auditor General, who does a good job, but other than the few ABCs that he chooses to audit, his only other audits are directed by the government, not independently. Independent review is the crucial point, and after this summer of shocking financial abuse by this government's hand-picked appointees, it is high time that we enshrined independent Ombudsman oversight and inclusion in freedom-of-information legislation for all government agencies, boards and commissions.

I'd just like to say that they have brought forward 22 agencies that they want to screen. I'd like to inform the House that there are 580 commissions and agencies under this government's control, so what happened to the other 560? Why isn't there oversight on them?

So far, for consultants on the ones we've managed to get to, it's around \$400 million. I think it would be within reason to think that with all those other agencies we'd be into the billions on consultants—absolutely outrageous. I have people coming into my office, single mothers with two kids, with nowhere to go. The social rolls are filled. They can't get into any programs, can't pay their rent and can't put food on the table. Yet we're paying consultants \$1.5 million a day—a day—and that's just what we

know; we don't know about the other 560 agencies and commissions.

I think it would be astronomical, and these things are going to come to light as we move into the next few months. There's more and more coming down the pipe, and I have a feeling that at the end of this, this government—they're all going to be wearing paper bags on their heads in this Legislature after all truth comes out. It's absolutely unbelievable what's going on, and the people of Ontario are not going miss this one, because we're going to make sure they don't.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. David Oraziatti: It's great to have the opportunity to speak to this motion this afternoon, and thank you, Speaker, for that opportunity.

With respect to a number of the comments that were made by members of the opposition, I'm happy to address some of those: first of all, with respect to the issue around what this motion is really talking about, and that is credibility and accountability of really any government in the province of Ontario, to ensure that taxpayers' dollars are spent wisely, that any government is accountable to the public and that there is oversight.

I don't think any member on either side of this House wants to see any tax dollars spent by the province of Ontario not to be spent wisely and not to be best used in the interests of all Ontarians. That's one of the reasons that our Premier and our government have taken significant steps to open the lines of communication and the oversight and transparency when it comes to many of the crown agencies and organizations in the province.

I know that members opposite had an opportunity while they were in government to bring greater transparency to government and chose not to. The Conservative government chose not to, and the New Democratic Party chose not to when they were in government.

I understand that it's obviously very convenient to talk about these issues today, and our government takes responsibility for the challenges that we face when it comes to oversight and accountability. Obviously, we need to ensure that any crown agency or board that is transferred public tax dollars in this province is held to account.

The auditor, because we're talking about financial accountability here, is probably the best person to be responsible for the oversight of those dollars and will ensure that they're spent wisely. I think we can all learn a lesson from the eHealth circumstance, where our government agreed that the auditor should be looking at the expenses in eHealth. I don't think any member on either side of this House would think that the taxpayer resources that were spent with respect to that particular organization were spent wisely, and we are taking steps to ensure that that does not happen again in any organization, in any crown agency, in any board, because we want to ensure that Ontarians get value for money.

With respect to the health care dollars that are being spent in the province of Ontario at present, I think

members would acknowledge that there has been a very significant increase in expenditures on health care in this province. In 2003, the health care budget was \$29 billion. Today, it's over \$42 billion—a 45% increase in health care spending in the province of Ontario in the last six years.

I heard the member opposite talking about health care cuts. In my riding of Sault Ste. Marie, there have been tremendous investments in health care that our community wants to see: a new hospital, a nurse practitioner clinic, funding for our group health centre, more doctors, more nurses being hired, more funding for home care, more long-term-care beds. Those are very, very important investments that are being made in my community.

1700

I don't want to get into too much of the back-and-forth around the record on health care, because we know what happened when the party opposite was in power: They thought it was a good idea to cut the number of doctors. In stark contrast, we have funded many of those positions, and a new school of medicine in northern Ontario that's having great results in our communities.

I'm very pleased with the results in terms of the expenditures of health care dollars in my riding and my community to address many of the challenges that were overlooked by past governments.

I'm not going to, like members opposite—I'm not going to suggest that there should be any organization, any crown agency or any board that mismanages money in the province of Ontario—and they need to be held accountable.

On this side of House, there should be no illusions about the views that the opposition has about members on this side of the House wanting to ensure that there is accountability and transparency in all organizations across the province of Ontario. That's what members of my community expect. I think that's what members of probably every riding that is represented here in the Legislature want to see take place.

Very recently, the Ontario Hospital Association was talking about greater accountability with resources that are spent in our local hospitals. I have also had those conversations with local representatives in my community.

As well, we know that as of January 1, 2010, Cancer Care Ontario will also fall under the Ontario freedom of information act. That's another important step. Since 2003, more than 80 organizations have been added to the lists that can be subject to freedom-of-information requests. We've also expanded the power of the Auditor General. By 2010, as well, we will post the expenses online for senior management in the OPS as well as cabinet ministers and political staff. I think it's a very positive step to ensure greater accountability and transparency.

Again, members opposite, while in government, had the opportunity to make some of these changes, but those changes were never made.

Sole-sourcing for contracts, a practice that went on during the NDP's time in office and during the

Conservatives' time in office, will not take place any longer in the province of Ontario.

Consultants' bills and the way those are submitted are being changed. The Ontario Integrity Commissioner will be able to more thoroughly review those expenses of consultants as well as agencies and boards under the Ontario government—another important change, a change that the party opposite had the opportunity to make but never made. I'd like to ask the members why that never happened on their watch. It's happening under our government.

There will also be more information posted online—actual expenses, cabinet ministers' expenses—and training for OPS staff around what is a legitimate expense and what can be claimed in the operation of fulfilling their responsibilities as public servants.

So we are taking steps to change the oversight and accountability in the province of Ontario. For too many years those changes did not take place. They're taking place on our watch, and I'm pleased that that's happening.

I'm also concerned around some of the comments that have been made by the opposition with respect to the spending of health care dollars, with respect to—I know, in our community, that electronic medical records at the Group Health Centre have been around for decades, and they have been a tremendous benefit to the people in my community. I know that every effort is being made to make sure that everyone in Ontario has access to their electronic medical records and that they're in a system where we can get them the information they and their caregivers need, in a timely way. I think everybody understands that that's a positive step and we need to do that. Nobody in this House will excuse the behaviour of any organization or crown agency that mismanages taxpayers' money—to getting to that end of what is a very, very positive initiative.

I suppose, to sum up—there are a number of other speakers who want time on this motion. The auditor has the opportunity—and I think is probably the best person, as has been said by a number of my colleagues—to review the finances with respect to various organizations across the province. I'll leave it at that.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think it's important to sort of put things in perspective. First of all, I want to commend Andrea Horwath and the NDP for bringing this debate to the House today and, in fact, to the people of Ontario. What is actually going on in almost all sectors of the government today is the concern about H1N1, which is a health issue being very poorly managed. What's going on in the Legislature here is the estimates committee, which is reviewing, program by program, spending of the Ministry of Health. The public accounts committee is dealing with the auditor's scathing report on the scandalous \$1-billion spending. So we are seized with this issue of inappropriate decisions and inappropriate spending of public money and public priorities.

That is the reality. This isn't a partisan comment. This is the reality of an update of where we are on November 3, 2009. And it isn't simply a case of partisanship. It's simply a case of the media today also being seized—on almost every page of every major media and TV outlet—with the mismanagement of health care, the most obvious, of course, being the H1N1 vaccine distribution issue.

That's just a very small part of it, but I think if you look at the editorial written by Andrea Horwath, she brings out a number of points to put this general lack of accountability and transparency right out in the open. She starts out by saying that there are \$42 billion of our budget—that's almost 50% of the total budget—that is going to health care. You have to ask yourself: Is it any better with all that spending? The evidence in my riding, irrespective of what's being said here—in Uxbridge, which is part of my riding, the hospital is near closure. The emergency room isn't even being attended by physicians on a regular basis. The Lakeridge Health board just passed an operating budget with conditions from the ministry, which is short \$13 million. They have a major program reshuffling that is going on thanks to this ministry. What Andrea says here is that we're spending \$3,500 per person—for every man, woman and child—on health care. Are we getting value for money?

The arguments today are clear that we need a full and open public inquiry into health care generally. It all came to bear and became very clear to me when the auditor, an independent officer of the Legislature, said that a billion dollars was basically wasted. It was scandalous, is what he said. They're trying to obfuscate, ignore, avoid and placate any of those observations. They want to blame Stephen Harper; they want to blame the Bob Rae government; they want to blame governments of 10 years ago; they want to blame Sir John A. Macdonald for everything that goes wrong.

I cannot believe, when you look at this budget—and the concluding remark by Andrea Horwath I think is very important. But let's keep our eye on the ball here. The auditor and all of the media looking into this say that the scandal continues. This is an article on November 3, and this is after the auditor's report of a billion dollars being basically unaccounted for. I have a list of all those expenditures here, if you want it, published by the media. They aren't political documents here. This one here is by the Toronto Star, which is the Liberal briefing note, and it says that \$236 million went into eHealth amid the scandal. After the auditor's report, they're still out of control.

The Premier doesn't seem to get it. Unfortunately—he's a nice man—it has gone beyond him. I think it's being run by Sarah Kramer or someone. This article goes on to say—and I have to give the member from Nickel Belt full marks for uncovering this scandal—that the government has allowed an extension of a system to 5,700 physicians out of the 23,000 in the province, at a cost of a quarter of a billion dollars. This goes on to say a fully integrated system this is not. This is still in a pilot phase, a trial stage.

If you look at some of the comments made in the articles that I've been looking at in preparation for this, the general comment is that this spending in eHealth has had no real consistency in value. The member from Sault Ste. Marie said that in his hospital and the northern medical school—the northern medical school was commissioned when we were in government. You got to cut the ribbon.

1710

Interjections.

Mr. John O'Toole: As far as I'm concerned, that means that they're not willing to admit what happened—they're the only ones who can do good.

Let's review where we are: This Legislature is seized by the troubling lack of leadership, lack of planning, gross expenditures, and the auditor and all the committees are talking about it. I can only say this to you: The spending goes on, according to an article this morning. What are you going to do?

I think our member from Leeds–Grenville was very reasonable—but he was passionate, of course—when he was suggesting that we have a full public inquiry. This is the most important service that the province of Ontario spends on. We're laying off nurses, and we spent a billion dollars on a systems solution that isn't working. What does that tell you? You can blame whoever you want. The reality is, none of the doctors are connected, none of the hospitals are connected, none of the clinics, labs, long-term care—and the LHINs aren't connected. Some are; some aren't. It's not working—it's not working.

I can tell you that there are articles here that I have today that say that Sarah Kramer and Dr. Alan Hudson knew that—they knew it. And they were on a spending spree. Imagine, this is the tip of the iceberg. I have a very few minutes to speak. In her opening speech and address to her peers, the person that wrote the speech—it cost \$25,000. You could have hired a PSW to take care of an elderly person for a year—for one speech made at Banff, at some fancy hotel that probably cost another \$5,000. There's no respect for taxpayers' money, and at the end of the day they're waiting in the rain to get a needle for a pandemic.

This certainly, at the very least, needs a full public inquiry, not just in respect to the auditor's work, where he was barred from some of the information—there were barriers put up so he could not get at some of the data. I can tell you right now that even the Premier and the minister this morning, when asked about the plan to deal with these frail elderly and others who could be subject to, dare I say it, even death—so I commend the NDP for bringing this opposition day motion on a topic that is near and dear to every man, woman and child.

And it isn't just about H1N1; it's about a lack of a plan, a minister who has resigned and a deficit of \$25 billion. I can tell you now that the evidence is just a start. I think if we dig deeper, we'll find it even more troubling.

I asked a question of the Minister of Government Services today, just a simple question: Where did the

\$190 million on the technology review from the Ministry of Government Services go? What I got was blaming some other government for some other problem and no answer. Clearly we've got to clear the air for the good of all the people of Ontario. Put the partisan politics aside and agree with this opposition day motion today, as we will, with our leader, Tim Hudak, leading the parade. Thank you.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm privileged and honoured to speak on the motion brought by the third party. I heard so many speeches before and I listened to many speakers speak about this issue. I think it was a shame when many members stood up in their places and attacked health care in the province of Ontario. My colleague and I just came from the estimates committee, where we were listening to the Minister of Health, to the good things our government and our ministry are doing for the people of Ontario and how we paid a lot of attention to many different details of health care and how much the people of Ontario get in service in this province.

No doubt about it, when you do a lot, sometimes you make a mistake. Mr. O'Toole, we're not blaming anyone, not Sir John A. Macdonald, or blaming you, Mr. John O'Toole, or your government in the past or many others who are standing in their place and attacking health care at the same time the people of Ontario gather themselves to deal with many different issues concerning their health.

So no doubt about it, every member of this House wants to protect taxpayers, wants to see the investment go directly to the people of Ontario. Every tax dollar should be utilized, should be used to benefit the people of this province.

I've had the chance many different times to visit hospitals and care centres in Ontario. I saw determined people committed to health care in the province of Ontario. In the meantime, the people in the opposition, the members of the opposition, stand in their place and accuse us, the backbenchers, saying that we don't care about health care. They think we are standing up just to read the message of the government; as a matter of fact, we're standing up in our place to defend health care, which everyone in this province benefits from, and our constituents in this province, in all the ridings, 107 ridings across the province of Ontario, who get benefits from health care on a daily basis.

We believe strongly in accountability and transparency. That's why our government opened more than 80 agencies and subjected them to auditing. We believe strongly that every hospital, every agency, every university, every college—every agency that belongs to the government of Ontario, every agency that receives taxpayers' dollars—should be subject to auditing. But we have to work together as the people who got elected to this place to see what's the best way, the best avenue to use in order to protect taxpayer dollars.

People are talking about the eHealth record, the H1N1 pandemic which we face in the province of Ontario. We

see how the minister is working very hard with our government to make sure all of the people in this province—all of the kids, all of the vulnerable people—receive the vaccination at the right time and the right place. That's why we should work together, all of us, on both sides of the House, to assist the Minister of Health, to assist this government, to assist our health care providers in the province to make sure that everyone receives the health care they need without any doubt, without any problems, because if we stand in our places, especially in this place, raise concerns and also raise flags about many different issues, we're going to scare the people of Ontario, we're going to scare our constituents. It's our job to make sure all the people calm down and deal with this pandemic in the right way, in a professional way, instead of scaring the people of this province.

I listened to the opposition speaking about health care. We listen to them attacking our health care, doubting our ability as a province to deliver good public health care, and to make this health care public and accessible for all people.

Mr. Paul Miller: We're doubting you.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: We listened carefully to the opposition many different times. We listened to them and we saw them when they were in government and what they did to health care. The Conservative Party—

Interjections.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: They closed a lot of hospitals, they fired a lot of nurses, they fired a lot of doctors, they closed off the clinics. In the meantime, we've opened a lot of hospitals and we've hired 8,000 nurses. We expanded our health care, and we listed so many different vaccinations and services for the people of Ontario.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Order.

Mr. Khalil Ramal: Madam Speaker, we expanded our investment from \$28 billion to \$40 billion. We're trying to modernize and transform health care in a way and in a fashion that supports all the people.

In the morning, my colleague asked the Minister of Health a very important question about the aging strategy—how we can keep our elderly people at their home. He gave examples from his house of his mother, when she received the best care possible, not just in Canada but in the world. They gave her the chance to walk again, to go out and shop, and also to visit her friends and family. This is the health care all of us are trying to support and maintain in the province of Ontario—not the members from the opposition, who are standing in their place scaring the people of Ontario, doubting our ability, doubting our health care. I think if they're honourable and they understand the future of this province, the people of Ontario paying taxes and their capacity and their skills to maintain that health care, they should stand up in their place and support the minister, support our direction, and support the people who work very hard to provide the tax dollars to be invested in health care, hospitals, daycares and in long-term-care facilities. It's our obligation and duty as citizens of this province to continue serving those people and to make

health care public and accessible for all, despite all the concerns, despite all the troubles. We have a Premier, we have a government and we have a minister who care about the people of Ontario, who care about taxpayer dollars, who care about how we can manage health care and how we can make it efficient, transparent and accountable, and how we can allow the people of this province to benefit from this investment and extend it to reach every corner, every inch, of the province of Ontario.

1720

That's why I'm voting against this motion that was brought by the third party. It does not make sense; it does not serve us in the province of Ontario.

I commend all my colleagues who spoke before me because they said the right things in order to protect health care, in order to create a comfort zone for the people who listen to us in this place.

Thank you again for allowing me to speak and support my colleagues, support our government and support our minister.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate.

Mr. Toby Barrett: We have just heard a great deal about standing in one's place and working together, and I'm very pleased to stand in my place and am more than willing to work together with respect to this motion that has been presented by the third party. I say that because I fully support the tone and the intention of this motion. I say that in the context of the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle that we've been discussing for the last number of weeks, and along with that, of course, the related mismanagement that is coming to light. I regret the fact that in the future, there will probably be a lot more information brought forward in spite of the efforts of this government to suppress it and to keep it secret.

So there is a need and we see a demand, if you will, in this motion calling for oversight. I'll read the motion: "The government of Ontario should act immediately to ensure that all Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care transfer payment agencies, LHINs and all MOHLTC-funded agencies, boards and commissions are subject to Ombudsman oversight and are covered by the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act."

I would like to talk a little bit about the work of the Ombudsman—not only the Ombudsman, but also the Integrity Commissioner. We know this Premier has turned to the Integrity Commissioner to take a look at the expenses of 21 agencies in the province of Ontario, including eHealth. There's another one in there as well; it will come to me in a second.

Again, I can agree with the nature of this motion, the tone. It's a motion designed to go partway to end the current level of costly incompetence based on entitlement when it comes to the spending of our health care dollars, and in part—in my view, anyway—to bring an end to the secrecy and the backroom deals with people's money.

However, while I agree wholeheartedly with that goal, I often wonder, as we hear calls to bring in the Auditor General or the Integrity Commissioner or the Ombudsman to oversee this scandal-plagued government,

whatever happened to the concept of responsible government? Whatever happened to ministerial responsibility?

Mr. Jim Wilson: They've never heard of it.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Why have they not heard of this? This is a concept that has been prevalent in the province of Ontario, and before that, Upper Canada, for at least 150 years.

This motion also states: "The Auditor General in his report on the electronic health initiative explicitly said, 'Throughout the years, oversight of the EHR initiative has not been effective.'" It's a very good point, and it's a key piece of reasoning to suggest the need for further oversight.

I do wish to continue to talk a bit about responsible government, a concept that eludes this present regime. Again, I'd like to think that when our forefathers set up responsible government in what was then Upper Canada, they did not envision the need to call forward oversight agents like the Ombudsman or the Attorney General or the Integrity Commissioner, an office that was just invented in the late 1960s.

The whole idea of responsible government was for government to be in itself responsible, to be accountable and to provide the oversight necessary to ensure taxpayer-funded programs did not go off the rails and into the ditch. If we go back 150 years, commencing with the reign of Robert Baldwin, co-Premier of the day, it was customary, it was really the concept of the day to expect a level of responsibility, not to mention competence, for government ministers. If we take a look at our history books, we find the "responsible" part of responsible government refers to "a system of government that embodies the principle of parliamentary accountability," the foundation of the British system, the Westminster system of parliamentary democracy.

So responsibility, accountability: concepts that, I feel, if we paid a little more attention to, we wouldn't need to be debating some of these points requiring yet another level of oversight when the first level, the primary level, is not present, oversight with respect to yet another and another expenditure of taxpayer dollars to ensure government is doing the right thing, the thing that it was expected to do in the first place. Now, in Baldwin's time—and this is back in the 1850s—the adherence to the concepts of responsibility and accountability was such that it was considered the right thing to do to resign. If leadership was called into serious question or if there was a major scandal that occurred under one's watch, one immediately stepped down. Robert Baldwin himself, under this responsible system of government that seems to be fading away—the system that he initiated, that he championed—stepped aside a number of times rather than compromise his values, his character or ultimately even come close to compromising his honour. Again, while Baldwin's example goes back some 150 years, these concepts of accountability and responsibility must remain.

As a member of this Legislature—I've been here 14 years—I've become familiar, and I've mentioned this

before, with the bronze plaque. It's placed on the wall at the east wing of the Legislative Assembly. It commemorates Robert Baldwin and commemorates his contribution. I suggest that the Premier, this cabinet and all government members present—they have to go by that bronze plaque when they walk into the east wing—take a look at the inscription. It's titled, "Robert Baldwin, 1804-1858," and it reads, "Born in Toronto, Baldwin devoted his entire career to a single cause. As a member of the assembly, as executive councillor, as Solicitor General, and as co-Premier, he remained true to his vision until the second Baldwin-LaFontaine administration established the principle of responsible government in Canada."

In his quest to not only establish but to reinforce the concept of responsible government, Baldwin resigned a number of times rather than compromise his values, his character and ultimately his honour.

I can't help but wonder how Robert Baldwin would have reacted to the lack of not only government accountability but cabinet responsibility that has become the hallmark of this present regime in Ontario. We have a situation today with a complete lack of responsibility and to date only one government minister, Minister Caplan, accepting the price of accountability for programs that went wrong when he was on the watch of that particular ministry. I cannot help but wonder why we're left to call in third party oversight agents.

1730

Why is it necessary to be forced into a position of calling in an Ombudsman with respect to these attempts to rein in uncontrolled spending and mismanagement? We've seen the Auditor General called in a number of times, of course, and even the Integrity Commissioner is being asked to do double duty by the present Premier with respect to the expenses of 21 agencies, including the eHealth organization. I regret this loss of really what it means to be responsible, to be accountable, to oversee.

I've got a great deal of respect for the Ombudsman. I think of his report on the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board; that's an excellent read. Many have read his report on the Ontario Lottery and Gaming Corp. The Ombudsman has a role to investigate complaints about services provided not only by the government itself but its organizations. I'm concerned about his ability to do that part of his job if we are adding the broader oversight function of all of the province's health spending, for example.

Similarly, when we take a look at the Office of the Auditor General, again, a position to assist the Legislature in holding the government and its administrators accountable for the administrative stewardship of public funds and the achievement of value for money in government and public sector operations—again, to assist with respect to responsibility and accountability—in my view, the primary responsibility lies with a cabinet minister. That's where the buck stops.

The Integrity Commissioner has been mentioned to take on a broader role. It's an office that was established in 1989. It reflected the need to maintain the high standards of ethical conduct in the public service, again

without unduly inhibiting people of outstanding ability in the private sector who may be interested in public service. The Integrity Commissioner does good work, as we know—as do the Auditor General and the Ombudsman—but it doesn't take the place of the responsibility and the accountability that lie solely within the function and the role of a cabinet minister, a Prime Minister or a Premier of the crown.

As I think about the obvious need now for renewed responsibility in our cabinet ministers and our cabinet committees, I wonder as well if the government would be behaving so cavalierly if my private member's bill on recall had made its way through third reading. Those who were here at this time will perhaps remember the Recall Act, 2004—proposed legislation building on recall provisions put in place in a number of states and provinces across North America. Fifteen states in the United States employ recall not only for elected state officials but also elected local officials. Half of these jurisdictions adopted recall well before the First World War. In the case of the Recall Act, 2004, any elected member would have been recallable for conduct unbecoming a member after a year in office, and a Premier would have been subject to a province-wide recall process in which all of the qualified voters in the province would have an opportunity to participate. As you may recall, this proposed legislation for recall, when I introduced this and during the debate, I actually felt about as popular in this House as a snake at a garden party. It didn't go over well with the government members. However, if recall legislation had been instituted in Ontario, I feel this culture of entitlement that underlines many of the McGuinty government's scandal-plagued recent years would never have been allowed to grow, would never have been allowed to fester in the place.

That said, we do not have recall legislation in the province of Ontario, as we see in a number of other jurisdictions—British Columbia, for example; California would be a well-known example. The Liberal government members voted that down quite decisively and, in the context of what has occurred over the last several years, I think I can understand why.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Further debate?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I'm very pleased to enter the debate. One of the things that I want to get on the record, and then I'll speak specifically to the motion: We've had it acknowledged by both sides of the House, the third party and the official opposition, that in fact there is more money that is going into the health care system since we took government in 2003, and that has been reinforced by a number of speakers on both sides of the House.

So now, when we talk about the investments that have been made in health care, we have agreement in the House that in fact there have been solid investments in health care. So then we go to accountability and transparency and what we have done as a government to improve accountability and transparency.

Before I get to that, I want to go back a couple of years and talk about when I was first elected. When I was

first elected, at that time the third party was in government. They were introducing a piece of legislation that was called Bill 160. Bill 160 was specifically targeted toward long-term-care homes. I can tell you that we met with all of the long-term-care homes in the county that I represented—Huron county—to work our way through Bill 160. I can tell you that that was not about making health care better, stronger or more investments being made in long-term care. And that certainly was shared with the government at that time.

The other thing that was happening at that time, as well, was a 13% reduction in medical spots for the schools. We know that doctors are the gatekeepers of our health care system. That's where you access it; that's where you go in. This is how you access your primary care. You cut it 13% and you know eight, nine years down the road you've got a big problem, and then it starts compounding.

Then the next government comes in. I want to share a little story, because we've heard a lot. We've heard people stand up—they remember a time when they were in government. They remember a time; they have rose-coloured glasses on about that time. That time was so fine that Robert Baldwin was quoted. They don't talk about the Magna budget. So I wonder, was that member in the House? Was that member bringing forward his recall private member's bill when he was in government for eight years? I don't think so. I think that he waited until he was in opposition, then he brought it forward.

I digress for just one minute. I want to talk about a story. As you know, I was the head of the town of Clinton. That government voted to close our local hospital. I can tell you, if any of them have never stood in a room in their local hospital and found out that a government has closed their hospital, then they have not walked a day in the community of Clinton. Fire barrels then came on the main street. We had people coming in by the hundreds. It was a very traumatic time: nurses called as old fashioned as hula hoops. They have rose-coloured glasses on if they remember that time.

The reality is that health care has evolved. The reality is that there are more family doctors. The reality, as supported by both sides of the House, is that there are stronger investments today by the McGuinty government in health care in many facets, and I can speak specifically in my riding to the long-term-care homes.

1740

Laughter.

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: The member from Bruce-Grey-Owen Sound laughs. I don't think he's laughing, because we heard his statement.

We look at the Bluewater redevelopment of my long-term-care home. That was the prototype for rural areas. And I see things that are happening in rural Ontario. Family health teams—this is a team approach. You know, 58,000 people now have access to primary care in my riding; 7,602 people who were orphan patients are now off the list.

When we talk about hospitals—specifically targeted by this motion for the Ombudsman—hospitals in rural

Ontario and across the province rely a lot on the goodwill of the community and the investments they've made. One of the things we did as a government was bring in accountability agreements, which, I would add, they both voted against, but here we are today talking about bringing in another level of bureaucracy.

Our government has been consistent in the accountability and the transparency. But when we talk about hospitals, we know that Tom Closson, who is the head of the Ontario Hospital Association, knows that you need the community's confidence and their trust. He's willing to work on further transparency and accountability, as they always have been, because they also rely on the communities to provide the services. It's a true partnership. That's what the previous governments never got: the sense of community that is needed in order to provide health care that is respectful of the communities in getting their needs addressed.

So when I see a motion like this coming forward, talking about putting in another layer—what in fact does it do? Does it increase the transparency? I would argue that what we have in place with the Auditor General—and we also have accountability agreements, we have LHINs that work on the actual planning.

We can do freedom of information in such a wider scope today than when we took over government, and one side—not both sides—the official opposition has consistently voted against transparency. So when I see members stand in the House and talk about Baldwin very respectfully, in a manner that took a lot of research, and then knowing that that member supported their government, which, by the end, wasn't even holding their budget in this House—so I can understand why something, when they were in government, wasn't supported.

But you can rest assured, on this side of the House, we began and we will continue to build the accountability and transparency in the system. The Auditor General's recommendations will all be implemented on eHealth. And, Speaker, when I have another opportunity, I will give a very long speech on eHealth.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member from Timmins—James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I, with pleasure, rise in order to support this motion. The motion, simply put, allows the Ombudsman of Ontario to do the work that they should be able to do when it comes to giving rise to complaints that people may have about hospitals and other institutions out there that are related to the health care field.

We all know in our constituencies that, from time to time, there are some complaints that are made to our constituency offices about some service that wasn't properly administered or some issue that the public is upset about, and there is really no recourse other than complaining to the hospital administration and/or the hospital board. In some cases, those hospitals have their own ombudsman, but that's the point: It's their own ombudsman. It's not the independent Ombudsman of the province of Ontario. So we're asking through this motion to give the Ombudsman of Ontario the ability to take on

investigations in those areas that he currently is not able to do by limit of his mandate.

But the other part, which is probably just as important, if not more, is the issue of FOI. For those people who are watching and wondering what that is, that's a freedom-of-information request. Currently, if you want to find out about some ministry decision that has been happening or some of the agencies that are covered under FOI, you have the right as a citizen or as a member of this assembly, if you want, to FOI information from the ministry on a decision that you may have some questions about. So you may ask for details having to do with financial information or why certain decisions were made, what some of the facts and some of the details were to that decision, and then what happens is that you get a letter back saying, "That will comprise 400 or 500 documents, and we are going to charge you X amount of dollars." If you pay that, you get that information and you are able to review it. Of course, they are going to protect the privacy of individuals, but you are going to get the basic information by way of FOI.

You don't have that ability with hospitals and other MUSH sector organizations in the health care field, and it is a real problem because we know, for example, given what happened with eHealth, that there are a lot of questions to be asked when it comes to how the government spent a billion dollars and ended up in a situation of really not getting any results for that billion-dollar expenditure in the end. Do people agree that we should have electronic records? Absolutely. I don't think anybody in this House disagrees. But a billion dollars, with sole-source contracts in the hundreds of thousands of dollars to friends of Liberal organizers and others who basically got business from the government to go out and print money? There were contracts in the neighbourhood, we found out—it was Madame Gélinas who raised a particular issue in regard to how many doctors—five thousand or 3,000?

Mr. Michael Prue: It was 5,700.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: So 5,700 doctors are going to be getting \$30,000 in order to sign up at eHealth, but when you add up the numbers, there's a \$60-million gap. So you ask yourself—

Interjection.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: How much?

M^{me} France Gélinas: Sixty-five.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A \$65-million gap.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: That's a big dinner at Barberian's.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: That's a big dinner at Barberian's, if it was still open. Imagine. Where has that \$65 million gone? It might be quite legitimate, but the public should have the right to FOI that information and find out: Did a contractor make that profit of \$65 million for taking on this particular task? Are the doctors actually getting more than the \$30,000 per doctor? Is there something that we're not aware of and that we need to be made aware of so that we're clear as to what has been spent, where the money has been spent, and have some clarity in that whole process? In this day and age, \$65 million is a

whole lot of money, and it would do a lot to make sure that services remain in your community where they're being shut down.

Therefore, we will be supporting this motion and asking everybody else to do the same.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed to the motion will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 10-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1748 to 1758.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Ms. Horwath has moved opposition day motion number 3.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise.

Ayes

Bailey, Robert	Hillier, Randy	Prue, Michael
Barrett, Toby	Horwath, Andrea	Runciman, Robert W.
Bisson, Gilles	Klees, Frank	Savoline, Joyce
DiNovo, Cheri	Marchese, Rosario	Tabuns, Peter
Elliott, Christine	Miller, Norm	Wilson, Jim
Gélinas, France	Miller, Paul	Yakabuski, John
Hampton, Howard	Murdoch, Bill	
Hardeman, Ernie	O'Toole, John	

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): All those opposed, please rise one at a time.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia	Gerretsen, John	Mitchell, Carol
Albanese, Laura	Gravelle, Michael	Naqvi, Yasir
Balkissoon, Bas	Hoskins, Eric	Oraziotti, David
Bartolucci, Rick	Jaczek, Helena	Pendergast, Leeanna
Brown, Michael A.	Jeffrey, Linda	Qaadri, Shafiq
Brownell, Jim	Johnson, Rick	Ramal, Khalil
Cansfield, Donna H.	Kular, Kuldip	Ramsay, David
Carroll, Aileen	Kwinter, Monte	Rinaldi, Lou
Colle, Mike	Lalonde, Jean-Marc	Ruprecht, Tony
Crozier, Bruce	Levac, Dave	Sandals, Liz
Delaney, Bob	Matthews, Deborah	Smith, Monique
Dhillon, Vic	Mauro, Bill	Van Bommel, Maria
Dickson, Joe	McMeekin, Ted	Zimmer, David
Dombrowsky, Leona	McNeely, Phil	
Flynn, Kevin Daniel	Meilleur, Madeleine	

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 22; the nays are 43.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): I declare the motion lost.

Motion negated.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Pursuant to standing order 38, the question that this House do now adjourn is deemed to have been made.

ADJOURNMENT DEBATE

TOXICS REDUCTION

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): The member for Haldimand-Norfolk has given notice of

dissatisfaction with the answer to a question given yesterday by the Minister of the Environment.

The member has up to five minutes to debate the matter, and the minister may reply for up to five minutes.

Mr. Toby Barrett: Yesterday, I did ask a question of the Minister of the Environment to which the minister claimed to have no knowledge of the details which I referenced, so for purposes of background, I'm quoting the minister on that one. I'd like to read part of my questions and part of the minister's answers into the record so that we're all on the same page here.

In my question, I asked, "Can you explain to this House why on earth you're forcing the food and the feed industry to report as toxic products things like Ontario-grown wheat, soybeans, as well as malted barley, chocolate, sugar and other baking ingredients? These products aren't toxic. Why would you do this, Minister?" That's on the record.

I'll just scan down to the minister's response. He stated, "I would be more than pleased to meet with the member on these particular issues that he's talking about. I'm not familiar with the exact details as to why those particular materials would be excluded...."

I had a supplementary and I queried, referring to the food and feed industry, "What do they tell consumers who learn that the products containing common food-based ingredients are, in the eyes of this government, stigmatized as toxic? This will be a public relations nightmare for the industry." And then I specifically asked, "Will you exempt the feed and food production companies from reporting as toxic the most basic of food ingredients?"

The minister stated that "there are no food ingredients on the list. So I don't know exactly what this member is talking about...."

"That's what this is all about, and we are not including any food ingredients on the draft list."

That's what went on yesterday. With these words fresh in our minds, I'd like to take a minute to explain to the minister the details of my query; I don't know whether he has been briefed in the interim. As well, I seek an answer with respect to the minister's intention regarding exemptions for food and feed production from reporting as toxic, again, the most basic of food ingredients. While the minister stated, "We are not including any food ingredients on the draft list," he knows, or should know by now, that upon further examination, this is not the case.

While he and the ministry can play word games and contend that a word, "flour" for example, is not listed on the toxic substance list, the fact is that particulate matter is to be reported by companies as toxic. In turn, flour, as well as other powder-like ingredients—chocolate, for example—can be ground up into particulate matter. That's really what I'm driving at: While food may not be listed on the toxic regulations, particulate matter is listed—you don't deny that—and when it comes down to it, the particulate matter is the food. The particulate matter is the flour, if I go back to that example.

The ministry can't say that particulate matter is toxic without also saying that that particular food product is toxic, because the particulate matter and the food are the same thing. It makes no sense for the ministry to suggest that anyone, especially consumers, make a distinction between food particulate matter and the food itself. Again, I suggest that the minister hasn't even considered the impact and the stigmatization this will have on the Ontario food and feed industry and, by extension, Ontario farmers. Maybe he doesn't care; I don't know.

Clearly, food processors outside of our borders will not receive the same toxic treatment. In fact, this is just one more impediment—it creates an unlevel playing field—with respect to doing business in this province.

Again, I'd ask the minister to rescind this backward-thinking proposition and exempt the food industry from reporting requirements.

Further, the minister's suggestion that he didn't know what I was talking about seems highly questionable, given that his staff met with food industry reps. The member for Oxford raised this in the House and described the negative impact that would happen, then he read the October 9 article by Christina Blizzard titled, "Province's New Rules Bite Producers Who"—

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): Thank you very much. The minister has up to five minutes to respond.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me be absolutely clear that food ingredients like chocolate, wheat, barley and soybeans are not on Ontario's proposed list of substances. Ontario's proposed list of substances is based on the federal National Pollutant Release Inventory, the NPRI, which includes substances that are known to be harmful to the environment or to human health, including a number of carcinogens. They are also included on the federal CEPA toxic list as well as on the US federal Toxics Release Inventory.

So let's be absolutely clear: The list that I have here, and I'd be more than pleased to send it over to the member, does not include food ingredients. It does include particulate matter.

As we well know, certain manufacturing processes, such as the milling and grinding of grains or the smoking of meats, produce substances known as particulate matter, which are known to be harmful to human health and the environment. In this case, it's not the type of particulates that are harmful, but it's the size that creates the problem, and the member well knows that. He knows that regardless of the source, particulate matter is a key component in the formation of smog, which contributes to over 9,000 premature deaths in Ontario each and every year.

In addition, some additives, preserves and food dyes are on Ontario's proposed list of substances. While provincial and federal legislation permits certain uses of these substances at specific levels, we are proposing to require manufacturers, including food and feed processors, to consider options to reduce their use or creation of these substances where possible or when safer

alternatives exist. That's really what our toxics reduction law is all about.

Draft regulations will not compromise existing food safety laws and guidelines. In fact, the agriculture sector is exempt. Reporting on these substances is not new for manufacturers. In fact, food manufacturers already report to the federal government and to the public, on their releases, over 20 substances, including particulate matter.

Ontario, as we well know, with this act is taking an innovative approach, one which focuses on inputs, reducing toxic substances at the beginning of the industrial process. This has proven in other jurisdictions to be an effective way of encouraging facilities to use or create less of these substances or, if possible, use a safer alternative.

Under this approach, facilities are required to track and quantify the toxic substances used or created at the facility, as well as to undertake toxic substance reduction planning. While planning is mandatory, implementation of the plans, as the member well knows, is voluntary. That builds on but does not duplicate the existing federal need to report to the National Pollutant Release Inventory.

Some of Ontario's leading manufacturers have demonstrated that investments to reduce toxics can result in increased competitive advantage, creating new business opportunities and reducing risks. This approach is protective of human health and the environment while supporting the transformation of businesses in Ontario to the new green economy. In fact, the government is investing, of our tax dollars, over \$24 million to help support industry for green chemistry alternatives and to reduce the use of toxics in operations, including grants for small businesses, site-specific technical assistance from experts, and the training and accreditation of toxic reduction planners.

My ministry has been happy to meet with many of the individual stakeholders. I've met with a number as well. I might just indicate to you what the result has been in Washington state, which has a similar law to what we're proposing here. Let me just report directly from the Toxic Reduction Advisory Committee that they set up to find out what happened after 20 years.

Almost 20 years ago, the state Legislature established a pollution prevention program similar to this to eliminate or reduce hazardous waste and hazardous substances. The businesses that implemented the plans reported a reduction in hazardous waste generation and hazardous substance use of over 200 million pounds. Financial savings from these reductions have saved businesses an estimated \$400 million.

That's been the experience in Washington state. Undoubtedly, we will have the same experience here, and the environment and all of us will be the better for it.

The Acting Speaker (Mrs. Julia Munro): There being no further matter to debate, I deem the motion to adjourn to be carried. This House stands adjourned until 9 a.m. tomorrow morning.

The House adjourned at 1813.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Aggelonitis, Sophia (LIB)	Hamilton Mountain	
Albanese, Laura (LIB)	York South–Weston / York-Sud–Weston	
Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Sarnia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels
Bentley, Hon. / L'hon. Christopher (LIB)	London West / London-Ouest	Attorney General / Procureur général
Berardinetti, Lorenzo (LIB)	Scarborough Southwest / Scarborough-Sud-Ouest	
Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse
		Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture
		Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
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Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
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		Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
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Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
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Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones
		Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement
		Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

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Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
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Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
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MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
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Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
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Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

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Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres
		Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme
		Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre
		Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakubski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

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Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
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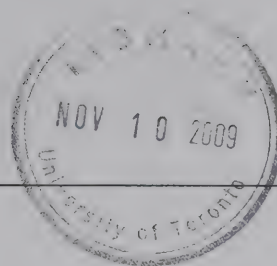
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First Session, 39th Parliament

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Première session, 39^e législature

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Wednesday 4 November 2009

Mercredi 4 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

Greffière
Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Wednesday 4 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Mercredi 4 novembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the non-denominational prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

ANIMAL HEALTH ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SANTÉ ANIMALE

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 27, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 204, An Act to protect animal health and to amend and repeal other Acts / Projet de loi 204, Loi protégeant la santé animale et modifiant et abrogeant d'autres lois.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I rise today on Bill 204, the Animal Health Act. I just want to say up front that I understand what the government is trying to do here. They're trying to put in place a regime in regard to the care and handling of animals so that we secure how animals are cared for and how they're dealt with on the farm, in order to make sure those animals are safe and not misused, but also, on the question of food, to make sure that those animals are cared for in the sense of not passing on any types of diseases to humans when we consume the products from those animals that are raised on farms in Ontario.

It's motherhood and apple pie. Most people are going to say, "That only makes sense; therefore, why not? This is a great thing and we should all move forward." But for the farm community, I think it's yet again the government that sort of doesn't get it, in the sense that, if you haven't noticed, the farm community is having one heck of a time. I know that some members on the government side know this, because they come from an agricultural part of Ontario, probably more so than me. I have agriculture as part of my riding, but certainly more farming happens in certain ridings in southwestern and south-eastern Ontario than in mine. Nonetheless, when I talk to people in my community who are in the farm community, they're mad as hell.

I talked to Mr. Hansen, I talked to Mr. Vanthof, I've talked to Legembre and others who are in the farm business, and said, "Listen, what do you think of all this?" They say, "Well, in good times I guess what they're asking us to do would be a minor inconvenience. But really,

when it comes to milking cows or beef for consumption or chickens—whatever it might be—do you think we are going to put ourselves and our livestock in a position where they may become diseased and we can't market the products we have on our farm?" Give me a break. They're saying, "We, among our own associations, deal with these issues. We're very serious about dealing with them."

If anybody has ever had a chance to visit a chicken farm, it's quite an interesting place to go. Not having a lot of chicken farms where I come from, I thought that chickens are just in a barn somewhere, and they let them grow and then basically cull them to provide meat to McDonald's and everybody else who eats chicken. Well, it isn't as simple as that. There are some pretty class organizations out there when it comes to how they handle chickens on farms. They are so concerned about making sure there's no disease, because it's not just a question of human safety, as far as the foods we consume, it's a question of them staying in business. There's no profit to a chicken farmer in having a practice on his or her farm that would put chickens, and in turn humans, at risk. Not only would that not make any sense from an environmental point of view, but also from an economic point of view. So people in the farm community have been saying to me over and over again, as I have asked about this bill, "Yes, motherhood and apple pie, but where's the rest of the stuff you can do to assist the farm community?"

We had the chicken farmers here last week or the week before with their annual lobby; they were here to talk to us about the issues around chicken farming. It was apropos, because we were dealing with this bill in the House at the time. I went to the reception and spoke to a number of people who are in the chicken business, and it was the same from them: I didn't find one person who was actually opposed, but what they were saying to me was, "There are a whole bunch of other issues that we need our government to be doing, and the government's not doing them. Why did they pick this as the centrepiece and not the other issues that are more important to our survival?"

So they're saying that this government, quite frankly, doesn't get it when it comes to farms. They're mad as hell at the Minister of Agriculture—that much I did figure out pretty darned quick. Of course, we have to say nice things to each other when we're all in each other's presence—the farm community, the government etc—but as I've talked to farmers privately at the chicken farmers' event and in my riding, and more recently last night, when we had the soybean people here, they're

pretty concerned. They're saying, "Listen, we have never seen in a long time the type of economic problems that the farm community has been facing." For example, you've got lower commodity prices for pig farmers, and you have a huge problem this year when it came to weather. As I talked to the soy farmers who were here yesterday, they were going on and on about how the weather this year has affected all of North America and how the yields for their crops—soybeans, corn and others—have been lower than they've been in a long time. They're saying that from that perspective they're going to have less revenue coming in from their crops, which puts them in a more difficult position when it comes to their overall economic health as farmers. So they're saying to me, "We get it. We understand. We're not opposed to this. But if this is all the government has to say about farming, then that leaves a lot to be desired."

So I just say to the government across the way, "Yip-pee, wonderful, great," you brought forward a piece of legislation that I guess you can't say is a terrible thing, because what you're trying to do is deal with the issue of making sure that humans are safe when it comes to consumption of animals off a farm. Who can be opposed to that? But the issue becomes, where are the other things you should be doing to assist the farm community? I think that's really the point I want to make in this particular debate: The government should be a little bit more active when it comes to being able to resolve those issues.

For example, what are we doing to deal with the issue of energy on the farm? The prices of oil and gas are up, the price of electricity is up—the price of natural gas is down; it's the only one that went down—and they're having to pay higher energy prices in order to heat their barns and run the machinery that they need to milk cows and do the work that needs to be done on the farm. Those costs are going up, and a lot of those costs are directly controlled by what happens in this Legislature; for example, electricity prices. They're saying, "Why is the government not doing anything to try to help the farmers absorb the higher costs of energy?" Energy is a big part of their business. Why isn't there some sort of a rebate program for oil products and electricity in order to assist the farmers to offset some of the costs of electricity and oil on their farms?

0910

We heard a farmer who was on the CBC about three or four weeks ago for a period of about a week talking about the difficulties he was having with energy. He was a hog farmer, and he was at the point of having to shut down the farm because they'd turned off his hydro. He was waiting for the government to respond by way of a program that they were supposed to put in place in order to help him keep the family farm that he has been trying to run and which he sees fast coming to an end. What was interesting is the federal government put in place a loan program, and I guess a loan program is a stopgap measure. But what he kept on saying was the provincial government is nowhere to be seen when it comes to assistance in his particular situation.

Again, I say government could choose to do something about energy costs for farmers, but they choose not to. Instead, they come forward with Bill 204, the Animal Health Act, and they say, "Here's more rules for you, the farm community, to follow. We think you're not doing a good enough job, so we're going to make you do a better job." Farmers are a little bit mad, and they're saying, "Well, you know, we've been in the farm business far longer than you've been in government, and we've been feeding people in this province far longer than you've been in government. We are somewhat resentful of the fact that the government's response to assist us at a time of deep need is to say that we're quite frankly having to do better because you think we are not doing as well as we should."

What about the issue of capitalization? You would know, members of this House who are in the farming business—my good friend Maria Van Bommel and others—far more than I do that they're expensive enterprises. Not just land, but the equipment and the staff and the manpower to run a farm is a huge undertaking, financially. You have two different problems. You have the issue of debt, because a lot of people have had to buy equipment and have had to buy investments in technology in order to make their farms more efficient, all of which costs a lot of money, and all of which means to say you've got loans to pay back at fairly hefty interest rates. Where is there assistance in order to assist the farm to offset some of those costs?

We thought it was important for the auto sector, when the auto sector was having problems, and rightfully so. The provincial government said, along with the federal government and along with the United States, "We are going to offer aid packages to those auto manufacturers which are having problems, such as GM and Chrysler." As a result of that, those companies are trying to reorganize themselves with the massive debt that they've undertaken. One can get into an argument about why they had so much of a debt, but that's a whole other story. But the point is the provincial and federal governments provided debt assistance to those particular industries in order to assist them at a very tough time when the banks were getting more restrictive with their lending. So they said, "Here's some assistance; we're giving you some money in order to give you some breathing room on the debt that you're now carrying, and we'll assist you a little bit into the future." Why are we not doing that for the farm community? Do they not have some of the similar problems that the auto sector has had?

We've done it in the case of forestry. In the forestry sector, certain programs were put forward in order to assist the forestry sector. Many would argue that those programs were too little, too late and, quite frankly, not very responsive. The take-up on these programs has actually been pretty weak. Nonetheless, the government wanted to appear to be helpful to the forest industry by putting in place these particular programs. Again, why has the farm community not gotten a similar type of aid?

As I talk to people in the farm community in my riding, and when I have a chance to discuss it with them, at receptions and other places where I've run across the people from the farm community, they're saying, "All right, the Animal Health Act, Bill 204, it's not a bad thing. But, my Lord, can you help me with my debt? Can you help me with trying to offset some of the costs of carrying this debt?"

Then there's the whole issue of not just debt, but of operating capital because, as you know, a farmer doesn't get paid until the product is either harvested from the field or the animal goes out of the barn and is sent out for processing. Even then, they don't get the money for a while because companies aren't very quick in paying them back. But again, on the whole idea of operating capital, where are we in being able to assist the farm community with operating capital in these very tough, difficult times? There are no programs to assist them to do that; therefore, they're again on their own. So they're saying, "All right, 204—fine—but where are you on operating capital?"

My point is that there are a whole bunch of things this government could be doing to assist the farm community in these very difficult times economically. Instead, what do we get? We get a government that says, "Here's more regulation. We're going to give you another regime you've got to follow. We're going to name a czar veterinarian to go out and make sure you're doing your jobs, and we're going to give the minister the power to go in and tell you how to run your farm if we think you're not handling food properly."

Some out there will say, "That's a great thing. We believe that's wonderful." But I just want you to put yourself in the position of the farm community. There's nothing in it for them to run a farm that's going to kill the very animals they're trying to sell. There's nothing in it for them to grow crops in a field that at the end of the day are not going to be marketable because they're somehow contaminated. What farmer would want to do that? You know, farmers are pretty practical people. They understand that the commodity they have is their investment. They take care of it. They ensure that when they sell their product and bring it to market, it meets the high standards that are necessary to sell those products at a premium price, because if you don't have good products, you ain't going to get the premium price. So a lot of farmers are saying, "My, my, where is this government at when it comes to its priorities?"

So I say to the government, we understand why you're doing it; it's in light of what happened at Maple Leaf Foods last year. You're trying to be seen as being proactive and making sure we don't end up with problems in our food supply further into the system than processing but on the farm; therefore, you're going to put Bill 204 in place to assist them. I just say to you that I think this is a bit of a slap in the face to the farm community, and it will be interesting to see if the government is actually prepared to do something that would respond to the key issues that face farmers today.

I want to raise another issue, and that's organic farming. Part of what is going to happen with this act is that there are going to be regulations, for example, that will conflict with the requirement that turkeys and other animals have access to the outside in order to be fed organically. You know that organic farming has become more and more a big part of the food supply system in Ontario, as it has across North America and Europe. There are more and more people in our society who, for health reasons but also for ecological reasons, are looking for organic farm goods to consume rather than the regular processed foods we now buy.

One of the effects of this bill is that it will make it more difficult for organic farmers to meet the requirements as a result of the way the bill is written. Again, you know, it's a bit like throwing the baby out with the bath water. I think the government has to recognize that in the end there is an important part of the farm industry, which is organic farming, and if we're going to have rules, we need to come up with rules that give those who are involved in organic farming the ability to carry out the practices that are necessary for organic farming, and rules and regs that make some sense to them. The way this is written, my understanding as I read it, and from a chat I had about it with a few people a couple of weeks ago, they're concerned that in the end, the way this is written—organic farming is not going to disappear; I'm not going to start saying that—they're certainly going to have a lot more difficulty practising organic farming. I think that's an undesired effect of this particular legislation.

Donc, pour finir, je n'ai qu'une couple de minutes pour dire qu'on comprend bien où le gouvernement veut aller; on comprend qu'ils veulent, à la fin de la journée, mettre en place un régime pour la protection des humains quand ça vient aux produits qu'on consomme de nos terres agricoles ici en Ontario. On ne peut pas dire que c'est une méchante idée parce qu'il ne serait pas juste de dire ça. Le seul point, c'est qu'il y a beaucoup de monde dans le domaine de l'agriculture, beaucoup d'agriculteurs qui ont de grands problèmes auxquels ils doivent faire face chaque jour. Pour le gouvernement d'arriver et de dire, « Notre seule réplique aux problèmes que vous avez comme agriculteurs est de mettre en place le projet de loi 204 », je pense que ça dit aux agriculteurs qu'ils n'ont pas vraiment l'appui qu'ils aimeraient avoir de leur gouvernement quand ça vient aux problèmes auxquels ils font face de jour à jour.

0920

Avec ça, j'aimerais vous remercier, puis je regarde avec anticipation les répliques que je vais avoir de mes collègues ici à l'Assemblée.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I want to inform the House that, six and a half hours of debate having elapsed on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c), this debate shall be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise.

Hon. Gerry Phillips: We would like debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to thank the member from Timmins—James Bay for his comments. I understand where he's coming from on this in a lot of areas, but I'd like to assure him that what this bill is trying to do is send a message to our consumers and to literally the world that Ontario farm products are safe and to be trusted. I think there's nothing more important that we can say to our agricultural community than that our products are safe and can be trusted.

The proposed legislation is something that our industry partners have been asking for to protect animal health, with a focus on the livestock and poultry sectors, which will help strengthen consumer confidence and really support the economic well-being of the industry. Ontario is the last jurisdiction in Canada to introduce animal health legislation.

There are a number of issues that come forward in this. The member mentioned organic farming, but I can assure him that, if passed, this legislation would apply equally to all livestock and poultry species regardless of how they're produced or raised. If passed, the legislation will make a huge difference to our agriculture communities.

The member mentioned the Chicken Farmers of Ontario. I met with them yesterday and they said that they're absolutely in support of this legislation; they're doing a lot of it already. The idea that we can have our sector protected and make sure that animals are provided for—this is just another part of the ongoing investments in protection that our ministry has made in this sector. Since 2003, we have provided over \$1.5 billion for farm income support programs. Our government has committed more than \$50 million to its Pick Ontario Freshness strategy. This is just another step along the way of making sure that our farm products are safe for the world.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Nepean—Carleton.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: It's a pleasure to be able to join the debate today on the Animal Health Act, 2009. Agriculture is in peril in this province, and this bill will do nothing to improve it. It disappoints me that the member just prior to me taking the stand—the floor—

Hon. Jim Watson: Oops.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Oops is right—to me taking the floor would say that this is a very important bill.

We in the Progressive Conservative caucus see possible substantive amendments to this legislation that could improve agriculture here in the province of Ontario. This bill could be amended to remove the section which will allow new permits and licences. In addition, the bill should be amended such that consent of the owner or a warrant is required to enter private property in all but the most urgent circumstances. There could also be an amendment to strengthen the section on compensation and to remove discretion unless there were circumstances such as fraud or negligence.

If we're going to talk about animal health in this province, we have to start with one very fundamental issue, which is what the Liberals are going to bring in on July 1,

2010, and that's the HST. Animal health is going to be significantly impacted in this province when veterinarian services go up by 8% to a 13% HST. That's going to be quite significant for people in the rural communities of Osgoode and North Gower and other parts of rural Ottawa and, of course, rural Ontario where they require veterinary services on their farms. This is a big slap in the face to the farmers in Nepean—Carleton, and is a big slap in the face to farmers elsewhere. If the Liberals want to bankrupt farmers, they're going about it in the right way.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Carol Mitchell: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to such important legislation. One of the things that I want to say is, I know that the members in the House know that agriculture is the riding of Huron—Bruce, and this is a piece of legislation that, quite frankly, my farmers have wanted to see for a very long time. They understand how important the chain is, and that the chain needs to remain strong. In order to be able to have a strong product line in the beef industry, in the chicken industry and in the pork industry, they understand that the linkage in safety is very, very important. We don't have to look back very far to remember what happened to an industry with the previous government and what happened with the beef industry in their term of office, to understand how that has a direct effect on the farms.

Clearly, what they had asked for with regard to the livestock was that there was a compensation portion, that there was the ability to go in and quarantine. This is something that they felt was important for the public to understand, that the safety was built into the system.

The members here know that supply management has been lobbying for a number of years, probably almost a decade, to get this to come forward. We've seen avian influenza in British Columbia and we see H1N1 affecting the pork industry right now. So this is a critical piece, and the legislation, quite frankly, is timely.

The member from Timmins—James Bay spoke about how the chicken industry was here last week. I had the opportunity to have a meeting with them. Quite frankly, we have the largest number of farms with regard to poultry, and they stressed how grateful they are that this legislation is coming forward.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Julia Munro: I'm pleased to add a few comments today on the debate. I think that everyone agrees with animal health in theory; the problem is that we also need to have farmer health. We need to have an issue around food security and food supply. When you have regulation upon regulation for farmers to be able to do this, then obviously there's a tipping point—a point where someone says, "No, I can't do this." I think that there's been an approach taken by this government that tends to look at much larger agricultural units than actually exist for the majority of our agricultural food producers.

I represent the Holland Marsh region, which of course is the salad bowl of not only Ontario, but supplies much

of the rest of the country. I look at the fact that I have individual farmers who are working very hard and who stay up to date, who do GPS testing on their land, and who understand microclimates. These are people who have a tremendous background and understanding of what they're doing and what they're producing. Obviously, they understand the urgency to have healthy food to provide for people. They also understand the competition. They know that in other jurisdictions with which they compete in the Ontario marketplace, a much wider range of pesticides, for instance, is allowed. So we have to be extremely careful that we don't simply shut down food supply in this province.

0930

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Member for Timmins–James Bay, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I'd like to thank all those who commented, in no particular order.

I think the comment that we need farmer health is exactly the point. You've got a farm community that's having much in the way of financial difficulty. Weather this year has affected them, commodity prices are affecting them, energy prices are affecting them; it's just on and on and on. It's almost like the perfect storm. We need to make sure that our farm community is in good health to survive this storm so that they can be there and continue to be an essential part of the food production industry here in Ontario. We certainly don't want to be in a position of having to import foods when we can produce those foods ourselves, grow and produce them into final products here in Ontario. The point that I was trying to make, and I'm glad that the Conservative member from—I forget the riding—made the point, is that we need to have a healthy farm community to be able to survive. We should not be just concerned about animal health, which is important, and I'm not saying it isn't, but we should be equally concerned when it comes to the issue of the farm community's health.

To the issue that was raised by the member for Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound—I forget the name of the riding. That's why I'll never run for Speaker.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Huron–Bruce.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Huron–Bruce. Thank you very much. I've only been here 20 years, and I still don't know all the riding names.

Mr. John Yakabuski: What riding are you from, anyway?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: It used to be Cochrane South. I forgot. No, Timmins–James Bay. That's right.

Anyways, the point that she makes is that she met with the chicken farmers, and they thought this was good legislation. I never said they said it was bad legislation. I met with the same chicken farmers. They said, "We understand it, but there is a whole wealth of other issues that we want this government to address. What they pick as their issue to address is animal health and the processing of animals on our farms, not dealing with the

issues of cost as they affect us in this very hard, difficult time."

So I just say to the government across the way that there's much more work to be done and it's about time to get to it.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, I didn't see you, Lou.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Obviously, they weren't paying attention. They didn't see me again. I'm delighted once again to join the debate about this particular bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I hesitate to remind you that you've spoken before on this bill and therefore can't speak a second time.

Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: I say to my good friend Lou, the member from Northumberland–Quinte West: That's why we didn't notice you, because we knew—we've been keeping track of things—that you'd spoken before. But I didn't have to stand up and say, "Stop that man." I knew the Speaker was on top of this and that he was going to catch you. Nice try, Lou, nice try. I'll tell you, it's pretty hard to slip things by these folks at the table here in the Legislature. I've never, of course, tried myself, but there's always a first time.

I appreciate the opportunity, even if it was somewhat delayed, to speak to this bill this morning. I was certainly intrigued, as I always am, by the address from the member from Timmins–James Bay. He is always thoughtful in his approach and very, very protective of the people who he represents, which is exactly what he should be doing as a member of this Legislature on behalf of the constituents that he represents. Unfortunately, sometimes I believe that members on the government side sometimes have to forget about their constituents because they're getting orders from headquarters, as they say. You remember Jocko Thomas of the Toronto Star? "Headquarters," he used to say—because they get their orders from headquarters over on the other side, too. They don't like to step out of line.

It was interesting: My colleague from Leeds–Grenville yesterday, in speaking to the NDP's motion on eHealth and the Ombudsman, spoke about how members on the government side just seem to be whipped continuously into supporting whatever the Premier's office dictates. I am on topic; I know you're looking at me, Speaker, and wondering, "What has this got to do with the bill?" Well, I'm absolutely getting there. Again, this is one of those cases where the Premier's office has said, "We're going to put this through."

First of all, it's a good time to put this bill through, because we're getting a lot of people upset about what's been going on in this government, particularly with respect to accountability and eHealth and, most recently of course, the bizarre rollout of the H1N1 vaccine program where, as you saw in the papers this morning when the minister was talking about Ontario having the best H1N1 program in the world—we saw that only about 300,000 doses had been administered to people—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Now the member is straying a bit, I think. Back to the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: That's right, Bill 204. I can always depend on the Speaker to remind me of the number of the bill, and that is always helpful—204. I'm thinking two, four, 2.4; it's actually 2.2, 2.2 million doses of that vaccine that Ontario received, and only 300—yeah, 204.

My colleague from York-Simcoe spoke about what's very important and is sometimes lost on the government: With their tremendous propensity to legislate and regulate, they forget about the people on the other side of the equation. There is not a single person in this province who does not place a tremendously high priority on the safety of the food that we consume—absolutely a tremendously high priority on the food that citizens of this province consume. One of the things that is very, very important, if you're going to have safe food, is you have to have a healthy production industry. Our production of food—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The member for Huron Bruce is prone to heckling and interjecting at times, unlike—

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, seriously, unlike myself when the members of the government are speaking.

She comes from a farming community, and she should understand that if we don't have healthy farmers who are given not only the opportunity but the tools and are allowed to work in the environment that allows them to be successful, then it's going to be very difficult for them to ensure that the food that comes from those farms is going to be safe. That's where this government has fallen short.

You've heard my colleague from Oxford, our critic for agriculture, speak on the total lack of support for the pork industry by this government. Even though the federal program has kicked in, Ontario won't even put in its 40% share to assist the pork industry in what is clearly the greatest crisis in its history. Yet the Minister of Agriculture sits back and ignores the problem.

What do they do? They bring in a bill. There are large portions of this bill that we can be supportive of, because, as I said in my original premise, who is going to argue against food safety? Who is going to speak against safe food? We believe that to be a prerequisite, an automatic, an inherent right of citizens to expect that the food that they consume is safe. What they're failing to recognize is that if they're not going to protect our farmers, then the safety of our food will certainly be in jeopardy as well.

I know the member spoke about the chicken farmers and how happy they were. Well, they didn't say they were happy with this legislation; the chicken farmers are just happy. One of the reasons they're happy is that they are one of the few agricultural industries that is doing extremely well. Why are they doing well? Because they're supply-managed. That is a very important distinction that separates them from some other commodities. The supply-managed commodities in this province are the only

truly successful groups. Grains and oilseeds have had some success, and they've also had difficult times as well.

0940

But talk to the beef farmers. I was glad to have the chicken farmers here last week and enjoyed their chicken wings; they were tremendous. I enjoyed the beer as well; it was pretty darned good too. Even though the chicken farmers didn't produce it, they did chill it and pop the corks, and it wasn't too bad to go with those chicken wings either.

Mrs. Julia Munro: It was Ontario beer.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It was Ontario beer, my colleague from York-Simcoe says, and that's great. That's one thing I'll say for Speaker Peters: I give him great credit for insisting that Ontario products are not only served as much as possible at the receptions that we host here in the building at Queen's Park, but also in the legislative dining room. That was a great move on his part and I applaud him for his support of Ontario farmers and the products that they produce. The government never did anything. It took Speaker Peters to actually move on that, and again, I credit him for that.

One of the problems with this bill—and I know Lou is interested, is watching closely, but you're not going to get another opportunity, Lou, possibly until third reading debate. You do understand that. You will be able to visit in committee—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Well, you're going to get a two-minute question and comment, yes, and we'd be pleased to hear from you. So get your notepad going there.

Anyway, one of the problems with this government traditionally, and we've seen it since they were elected in 2003, is that many, many times they use the approach—and I've heard this from my friend from Kenora-Rainy River, the former leader of the third party; I've heard him use this expression, and he's so correct when he uses it: They've taken a sledgehammer to a fly.

If you ask people in the agricultural business, when the spectre of warrantless entry and warrantless search is put before them there is a tremendous fear. It's sort of like when you get the call, Mr. Speaker—even though I'm quite certain that you've never had a moment on your tax returns where you've done anything, if you know what I mean—but when you get one of those calls from Revenue Canada and they say, "Hello? Yep, we're going to be coming down to do an audit on you," your life goes upside-down, because you think, "Oh, my God, those guys are coming in and they're going to sit down at my kitchen table; they're going to tear apart everything I've got. They're going to go back to the time when my grandfather did a little bootlegging, and they're going to find something, and I'm going to pay. I know I haven't done anything wrong, but I know those guys are going to dig something up that I might not even know about." That's what happens when you've got this warrantless search thing hanging over you.

All of a sudden, the inspectors come in—and I know how they work. I'm going to give you an example: In the Ministry of Labour, under the guise of protecting people, they'll go into a sawmill, for example—and again, you want to talk about an industry that is struggling? I mean, unbelievable. I've talked to people who've been in this business for 60 years themselves, and they've never seen anything like it. This government is about to make it worse with the legislative regulations that they're bringing in.

I'll be talking about that a little later, maybe, but not necessarily in this bill, because, as you always caution me, Speaker, I need to stay on the subject of the bill. The bill here is about farm safety and food safety, and I want to make sure that—I see the member from Barrie is helping the Speaker. She wants to make sure that everything is on the subject of the day. I do my very best at all times to follow that—that's a standing order, I believe, Mr. Speaker.

So when you have this power, this draconian power, to just, without a warrant, walk onto the farm of these hard-working people who have invested their lives—their lives—in providing good-quality, safe food for the people of the province of Ontario—and now they're going to have this hotshot inspector walk in, fresh out of school, and he or she is going to show them who the boss is. They're going to go in there because of the notch on the gun. "I got to put another notch on the gun, because we're going to go in there and we're going to show these people who's boss."

A farm—and this is about animal health—and a livestock farm—

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: You're digging yourself into the ground.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, no, I'm not, Lou; trust me.

A livestock farm—do you know what we do? For all of those people who don't understand, you raise animals, you kill them and they're served as food. It's not a pretty business. That's what you do. If you want to have meat on your table, it doesn't come from A&P or Food Basics or whatever the heck—maybe some of those folks on the other side are getting theirs at Pusateri's or whatever, but we regular people have to buy it from the food store. But we know where it comes from. It comes from the heart and soul and blood and guts and sweat and tears of the people who give their lives to produce that food. That's where it comes from.

All they want is a fair shake from this government. And where is this government when farmers are in trouble? They dance around the issue. You'd think they were on—what's that show on Monday nights? My wife always wants to watch it.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Dancing with the Stars.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Dancing with the Stars.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Look at them dancing over there—dancing. Shame on you.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But they're not having waltzes. I'm trying to think of—I'm never going to be on that program because I don't know all those dances, but I'll

bet you my friend from Parkdale—High Park knows those dances.

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: Used to.

Mr. John Yakabuski: But it would be one of the dances where you kind of get close but you never really touch. You show some emotion but then you slip away. It would be one of those dances where you never actually get intimate. That would be the approach of the government. They want to be there with the farmers; they want to be there for the photo ops; they want to be there and they want to make all these pronouncements. They want to make these pronouncements about how the McGuinty government is the farmers' best friend, but the farmers know different.

From time to time, of course, they get these third party validations—and Geri Kamenz, the former president of the OFA, was great at those third party validations. And what did he get for it? My friend from Nepean—Carleton would know. He got himself a cushy government appointment when his time at the OFA was done. You really have to ask yourself: Was he speaking for the farmers or was he padding his nest, preparing for the day when the folks from the other side, the appointments secretary of the Liberal Party, would come calling and say, "Geri, you've done us well. We're paying you back. Don't worry. You'll be looked after?"

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, the member for Huron—Bruce is upset because they don't like to see—the average person out there doesn't know probably that that appointment came immediately after the end of his term at the OFA.

Do you know the old story about if it looks like a duck, walks like a duck and quacks like a duck, it's a duck? Well, I'll tell you, that was a mallard in full glory, that little game that went on between Kamenz and the government and the pay off that existed after all of those third party validations on every announcement they made over his term while he was president of the OFA.

0950

One of the things that is in this bill, although they have no enforcement powers or anything until the feds actually produce a piece of legislation, is traceability. People understand the importance of traceability when it comes to protecting food, but the minister herself, when she tabled this legislation, spoke about it, saying that they need the federal government to have legislation that they can piggyback on in order to have this aspect of the bill actually functioning here in the province.

I don't have much time, but I want to talk about one thing. You talk about support for farmers. My friend from Durham gave me a piece of news coverage here that says, "Farm's Lights Back On, For Now," where a farmer who had invested huge amounts of money in his operation had the power cut off. He was a hog farmer, of course. That's that part where I was talking about how they've never been in a greater crisis, and the Minister of Agriculture sat back and is continuing to sit back while

they spiral into worse and worse conditions on a daily basis. Thank goodness the creditors have agreed to pay that outstanding hydro bill. It was Wayne Bartels, and his 4,500 hogs are out of the dark for now.

Wayne and his hogs are out of the dark, but sadly, this government for the most part remains in the dark. It is fixated on staying out of the news on its scandals, the summer of scandals has turned into the autumn of scandal, it will be the winter of scandal, and this government is wrong-headed, bringing in legislation when it really should be dealing with the crisis that it created.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: It's a pleasure to follow the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke and his impassioned plea on behalf of farmers and, really—let's table this—his entertaining wit. We always look forward to what he has to say.

It reminds me, when I was in Huron–Bruce as a minister, some incredible farmers in that part of the world, who really work hard, told me this joke. They said, "What does a farmer do when they win the lottery?" And the answer was, "They just keep farming until it's all gone."

Our concerns with this bill are manifold. Number one, we're concerned that so much is left up to regulation, it's very difficult to see how this is going to play out, and the devil is often in the details of these pieces of legislation.

I'm also particularly concerned at tracing something like listeriosis and how that's done. Maybe I'll take a few minutes, when I have a few minutes, to talk about that.

Finally, folk in my riding in particular, although we're city slickers, are concerned about animal health, and they are concerned about organic farm practices and the plight of the smaller organic farmer and how they'll fare in this. We fall way behind, for example, the European Union, way behind many jurisdictions in the States on protecting animals and protecting our growing organic farm group. I'd like to focus on that because that's a concern to my constituents. Also, what happened when this government took Maple Leaf Foods' side over the side of small butchers and drove butchers out of business in my riding—I'll spend a few minutes on that as well.

But suffice it to say, again, it's difficult to know what this bill is going to mean. It's got a very grandiose title, but when you actually read the bill, you see that so much is left up to regulations and enforcement—with no money, of course, to go along with the enforcement—that one really doesn't know what's going to happen on farms and one really doesn't know what's going to happen for animals with this.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Northumberland–Quinte West.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: It's a pleasure to respond to my good friend from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. Let me say from the outset that I learned this morning that farmers in Ontario do have a big supporter in John, because I know that if they need help spreading some manure, John

did a lot of that here this morning. He did a great job with that.

The short memory: On one hand, he says, "How can you say no to food safety?"—then let me just give you some little tidbits. Meat inspectors under the previous government—gone. Walkerton: Under that watch, there was no inspection. I come from Brighton. There was an egg office in Brighton—gone.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: Then put it back, Lou. You've been in government for six years.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: We did put some of that back: 170 meat inspectors.

They're not talking about the good work this government is doing.

I tell you, I met with the chicken farmers as well, and they were thrilled with this particular piece of legislation.

I met with the grain and oilseed folks. Just yesterday, they were here. They're thrilled with this piece of legislation, and they're prepared to work with us in making it better.

The opposition can say whatever they want, but I think this record speaks for itself: from 10 meat inspectors to 170.

So, yes, we do have safe food in the province of Ontario, thanks to the work that the ministry has done and thanks to the work this government has done to restore some of the safety that was long, long gone.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: If we want to talk about manure, then the member from Northumberland–Quinte West might want to talk about how he's been spreading it for the past two minutes. My colleague from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is a champion of the agricultural sector in eastern Ontario and in his own riding.

Let me tell you what Today's Farmer said: "Ontario Animal Health Act Heavy-Handed." It's not just that. The reality is that this Liberal government has continually cut resources to farmers. Not only have they cut resources to farmers, but in the next year alone, the folks in the province of Ontario who are fortunate enough to be farmers in today's era are going to be confronted with a couple of things—that you are going to make it even more detrimental for them to make a living and for us—

Interjections.

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: The reality is, this is the government that is going to increase veterinary services in this province by 8%, harming animal health. This is the government that is going to increase energy costs for farmers as a result of the Green Energy Act. They are going to make it less affordable, not just for everyday Ontarians but in particular for farmers.

The people of Nepean–Carleton, from the farm communities in Osgoode and Rideau townships, of North Gower and Burritts Rapids, can't afford this Liberal government anymore. And I can tell you another thing: Your own constituents can't afford you anymore. The reality is, on election day in 2011, you will be rewarded for this

heavy-handed act and you will be rewarded very well, and they will send you for a very long vacation.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: The member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke is always on topic. One thing he mentioned in passing—he failed to stress the importance of this government introducing a bill that, if you look at the details, is fraught with a lot of red tape.

Stakeholders were asking for a traceability system, which is largely absent from the bill. Traceability allows the livestock producer and the consumer at the end of the day to be able to trace the source of potentially contaminated food. There's a system here—it says the minister will allow a system to set up a framework for traceability.

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It goes way too far—from my notes here—for what is required to protect animal health. It creates a system of permits and licences which are really more red tape, and adds additional costs to the farm operation. There's no compensation for the time and the paperwork and expense that are being downloaded to the agricultural community at a time when agriculture, on all sides—both on the livestock and field crop side—is fraught with the challenges in low commodity prices.

When, as the member from Nepean–Carleton said, you factor in the HST that's coming on farm equipment, veterinary services and the rest, the story for agriculture and our food security and food safety is very much in peril. I don't see a lot in this bill other than the fact that it champions food quality and food safety, which is not disputable here. We would go a long way to support that, and in fact we do support that provision. But when you're giving them more work, more responsibilities, and are downloading the responsibilities to an already stressed sector of our economy, it certainly doesn't serve the end that you suggest that it does serve.

I would say one thing: The adding of the chief veterinarian for the province is a good system. We would support that.

But there are so many things that are wrong, we can barely even find support for this bill—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I appreciate the comments from the members for Parkdale–High Park, Northumberland–Quinte West, Nepean–Carleton and Durham.

I want to focus on what the member for Northumberland–Quinte West said when he talked about manure. It reminds me of when Mitch Hepburn, the former Liberal Premier, was on a campaign stop one time and he wanted to speak to the crowd. He wanted to get elevated so that they could see him, and it was a farming community. All they did was they brought out this manure spreader and they got him to stand on the manure spreader while he addressed the crowd. Partway through his address, he alluded to the fact that he felt a little uncomfortable delivering the Liberal platform from a manure spreader, and

immediately, the interjection from the crowd was, "Well, wind 'er up Mitch, because she's never carried a bigger load." And that is exactly what you're getting from the member for Northumberland–Quinte West. That is what the whole Liberal policy is when it comes to farmers in this province.

Let's get a couple of things straight. When the Liberals want to talk about Walkerton, they should read the whole Walkerton report and read about the drunks who deliberately falsified records and failed to report, thereby jeopardizing people's health and causing the deaths of several people. They faced criminal charges as a result of that. Let's call a spade a spade about what happened in Walkerton and stop pretending that that was somehow anything but a failure of individuals who deliberately falsified records in order to protect themselves, thereby causing the ill health of over 2,000 people and the deaths of seven. Let's get the record straight when you want to talk about Walkerton.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: I have been listening to this debate with enthusiasm. Let me say for the record, right off the top, that our aim in the New Democratic Party, of course, is what this bill's aim is as well, and that is to protect animal and human health and to prevent what we had in the summer of 2008, which was a horrible tragedy, deaths from listeriosis.

I just want to go back to that summer and talk a little bit, again, about—and this is part of the problem of this bill. Part of the problem of this bill is that it seems to fall on one side rather than the other. It sets into place aspects that look and sound good, but everything is left to regulation. There's not a lot of money to back it up, and we really don't know how it's going to be enforced or what that's going to look like until it is. Based on some examples of how this government has enforced some of its regulations vis-à-vis food and animal safety, one has real cause for concern.

As the deaths from listeriosis were happening, two little butcher shops in my riding, for example, shut their doors. They shut their doors not because there was anything wrong with their operations or anything unsafe. Certainly, the Toronto Board of Health had passed both of those operations, one for 50 years—50 years—and the other for at least 20 years. They were shut because an inspector came from the province and told them they would have to install about \$200,000 worth of upgrades just to be able to fulfill the letter of the regulatory law. They couldn't afford to do it. They were ma-and-pa operations; they didn't have that kind of money. They were barely making ends meet, and this drove them out of business.

Interestingly, the listeriosis problem did not drive Maple Leaf Foods out of business. Again, we see the fat cats, the big companies getting help from this government but not the little guys, not small business, not those ma-and-pa industries that are really working hard and just trying to survive. I'm afraid that is what this might mean—again, we don't know for sure, but we've got

some bad examples, and I'll go into those in a minute—for farmers. It might mean that the government picks the large producers over the small organic farmers. That's what we'd like to see prevented.

We have an example. The Toronto Star brought this to light; otherwise, it probably never would have come to light. This was around turkey producers. The Turkey Farmers of Ontario passed a regulation restricting turkeys from going outdoors on safety grounds. Unfortunately, that's the way organic farmers work. Many in my riding and many in Toronto—you can see this, as witnessed by the Healthy Butcher on Queen, Rowe Farms on Roncesvalles etc.—really would prefer to buy organic free-range fowl. What happened is, the turkey farmers passed this legislation restricting turkeys from going outdoors on safety grounds—debatable, I must say, because certainly in California, when they were looking at a proposition down there, they discovered, quite contrary to the Turkey Farmers of Ontario, that it's no less safe to let poultry roam than it is to keep them chained up in unbelievable circumstances. With the stroke of a pen, the Turkey Farmers of Ontario drove out of business organic turkey farmers. That's the kind of enforcement of the regulations that aren't clear in this bill that we in the New Democratic Party would like to see prevented.

In terms of animal health—I don't have a lot of time so I'm going to leap ahead to that, because there is a great deal of concern in my riding for animal health and the way that farm animals are treated. You need to know that we're not looking good in the international community in Canada for the way that we treat our farm animals. You don't have to be a fan of Babe: Pig in the City to know this, but you do need to know that a report by the Canadian Federation of Humane Societies ranked Canada well behind Australia, New Zealand, the United States and the EU in terms of farm animal welfare.

Let's take an example. In 2007, the EU banned veal crates. A veal crate, for the non-farmers in the crowd, is so small that a calf that is raised in them cannot turn around for its 16 weeks of life. If that isn't cruel, I don't know what is. I have long since refused to eat veal because of the way veal is produced. Many of my friends are the same in that regard. The EU banned it in 2007. Will this bill help veal calves? No, not at all.

Sow stalls, which keep pregnant pigs in such close confinement they're virtually unable to move throughout their 16-week pregnancy, will be banned in the EU. Does this bill make any specific moves around banning that kind of cruel practice? No, it doesn't. It goes on all the time.

The EU agreed to ban battery cages for laying hens in 2012, stopping a practice that denies birds virtually all their natural behaviours and keeps them so cramped they cannot even flap a wing. Here we're even behind Arnold Schwarzenegger's California—the Republicans' California. We're behind them; they've even passed a bill that will ban battery cages, sow stalls and veal crates by 2015, not to mention Colorado, Florida, Oregon, Arizona and Maine, which have all passed legislation banning inten-

sive confinement systems. We still have them on our farms.

The member next to me was absolutely correct: We in the city buy our meat; it looks very sanitized as it comes in a little plastic package. We don't see where it came from. We don't know what kind of lives, brief though they may be, those animals had. Yet we've got a range of organic farmers who would like to change that, and we in the New Democratic Party would like to at least enable them to do so. We would like a government that stands up, again, for not only the big farmers—the big operations—but also the small ones.

If the government does trace back, for example, an outbreak of listeriosis or anything else that comes from farm animals, and then calls upon the farmer to destroy those cattle or those fowl, what kind of compensation, for example, will an organic farmer get compared to someone who doesn't raise their cattle or their fowl or their pigs organically? It certainly costs way more for the organic farmer. Will they get the same compensation per animal per kill? These are all unanswered questions; these are all the kinds of questions we'd like to see answered.

Just to point to a larger strategy, and that is the fact that we don't have one. We don't have an Ontario food strategy. Food activists have called for the longest time for a Canada-wide food strategy, but also for an Ontario-wide food strategy.

I was at a wonderful inauguration in Parkdale–High Park the other night for the beginning of the West End Food Co-op. I invested in that, as did about 150 people. What we'd like to see is what many in the city of Toronto would like to see: co-ops being able to sell locally grown produce directly from farmers, locally and organically raised produce that's healthy for us, and being able to make it affordable so that we don't have to go to a large American outlet like Whole Foods to buy good, healthy, organic produce. That's the kind of movement that's really growing in Ontario. That's the kind of movement that this government should be supporting, but I don't see any support for that kind of movement in this bill and I don't really see anything that's going to support animal health in this bill. I see an enabling system set up, again, where much is left to regulation and much is left to the fiscal capacity of this government, to the number of inspectors, to the wisdom of those inspectors, because who knows—it's left up to them—what they'll do and what they'll rule as cruel and unusual, and as not. So much is left up to regulation that it's very difficult to get excited about this bill. It's very difficult to see how this bill would conceivably prevent a listeriosis outbreak like the one we had in the summer of 2008 and the one that inspired this bill.

Certainly, this bill should go to committee. There will be lots of deputations, I'm sure, to this committee, and we'd like to see those who are concerned about animal welfare, as well as those who are concerned about the small organic farmer, make deputations to this committee so that this bill can do what it purports to do. That's all

that we ask at the New Democratic Party, that this bill do what it purports to do, because there is a need for that.

On a general note, as the small business critic for the New Democratic Party, I would like to see this government for once look at the small producer, look at the small business person, take their glance away from the large contributors to their political campaigns and from the large companies, the large producers, and look instead at the small farm, at the small ma-and-pa butcher shop—I could go on—the small pharmacy over Shoppers Drug Mart etc. Again and again, this government opts to protect the wealthy at the expense of the middle class and the not so wealthy.

I'm looking forward to the committee on this and to the deputations, and I'm looking forward to a bill that actually does what this one says needs to be done.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Pursuant to the standing orders and with reference to my trusty pocket watch, this House is in recess until 10:30 of the clock.

The House recessed from 1014 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: I'd invite all members to join me in welcoming my son, Joshua. It's take-your-student-to-work day today.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I'd like to introduce Gary O'Neill, president of the International Union of Operating Engineers, and his son, Kris, who are in the gallery for take-your-dad-to-work day.

Mr. Robert Bailey: I'd like to introduce two of my guests in the opposition gallery: my son, Robert Bailey, and a good constituent of mine, Mr. Gary Ingram, from Petrolia, Ontario.

Mr. Rick Johnson: I'd like to introduce the mother of page Rebecca Bartlett, Deb Bartlett. She's a former reporter from my area who spent many years shadowing me in my role as a school trustee, and she's visiting from Little Britain.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm proud to introduce my son, Jack Arnott, and my nephew Ben McIntosh, who are here with us this morning as well. Stand up, guys.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I wonder if that'll be a dynasty up in that riding, Mr. Speaker? It could be the beginning of a dynasty.

I would like to introduce from Kapuskasing Joanne Baril and Roger Lachance, who are here today to meet with Minister Smitherman, along with Jonathan Hack.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to welcome to the gallery Hannah Korbee and her dad, Leon Korbee, who are joining us today.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): On behalf of the member from Etobicoke North and page James Profiti, we'd like to welcome his father, Pat Profiti, to the Legislature today.

We also would like to welcome a number of students from the deputy finance minister's office from grade 9 for take-your-kid-to-work day. We'd like to welcome those individuals to Queen's Park.

I'd also like to welcome a number of grade 9 students who are taking part in the Ontario Legislative Assembly's take-your-students-to-work day. They are Nicholas Lao; Mark Jimenez; Avesh Chadee; Dana Mariah Chadee; Sean Giverin; Christina Vasconcelos; Linnea Sage; Senen Yuen; Abby Cromwell; Kevin Turner; Julia Nakamishi; and Jade Bautista. Welcome to Queen's Park for the day as well.

Also, I would like to welcome to the Speaker's gallery Mr. Don Brewer. Don is the manager of broadcast services from the House of Assembly of Newfoundland and Labrador. Welcome.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: Although I think he might be a little young for the grade 9 take-your-kid-to-work day, I notice that Rob Benzie from the Toronto Star has his son with him today, and we'd like to welcome him to the House.

ORAL QUESTIONS

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. On October 21, you attended a press conference to announce that H1N1 vaccination clinics would be opening a week ahead of schedule. In the 13 days that followed, it was obvious from the long lineups and wait times that you weren't ready. Minister, why did you roll the vaccination plan out ahead of schedule?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm very happy to answer the question. We wanted to get the vaccine out and protecting Ontarians as quickly as we could. We could have, I suppose, withheld the vaccine and kept it in our fridges, but our decision was to open the clinics to move forward because H1N1 is a serious illness and we want to protect as many Ontarians as we can as quickly as we can.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Yesterday we asked the chief medical officer of health whether she recommended the press conference to announce opening clinics a week ahead of schedule. She said it wasn't her idea. When we asked whether the minister requested the press conference, we didn't get an answer. Minister, why did you make the chief medical officer of health announce that you were ready to administer the vaccine a week ahead of schedule when you weren't?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me make this very clear: Dr. Arlene King, the chief medical officer of health for the province of Ontario, and I have been working very, very closely together to get the vaccine that we have out and doing what it's supposed to do, which is to protect people from H1N1, as quickly as we can. We could have held back. We could have held back until we had enough for the whole population. That was not the

decision we took. Our decision was to get the vaccine out as quickly as we could.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: A pattern has developed with the McGuinty Liberals. A scandal or a damning report comes to light and a hastily assembled conference is called to try and change the channel. The release of the cellphone driving bill, the tobacco lawsuit, the full-day kindergarten and auto insurance announcements can all be tied to bad-news days for the McGuinty Liberals. The early rollout of the H1N1 clinics was announced a day before the fall economic statement revealed that the McGuinty Liberals are running a record \$24.7-billion deficit. We can understand the McGuinty Liberals shying away from talking about their scandals, but why drag the chief medical officer of health into their political PR schemes?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I have to say that I am astonished at this question. I am amazed. I cannot quite believe that what I'm hearing—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I simply can't believe that what I am hearing is that we should have withheld the vaccine that we had because—it's extraordinary to me. I think, frankly, on behalf of the people who were able to receive the vaccine a week ahead of schedule, the member opposite had better apologize.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Again my question is for the Minister of Health. During question period yesterday, the minister showed how out of touch the McGuinty Liberal government is with the Ontario public, Ontario front-line health workers, and reality. Does the minister regret saying that Canada's worst government has the world's best vaccination plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I don't for one minute regret that because we have an excellent vaccination plan that is in place that is rolling out. We're on our way to having over two million people receiving the vaccine by the end of this week. We are a week ahead of schedule. The lines have now come down. Public health officials across the province have responded to unexpected demand and the vaccine rollout is going extremely well.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Let's look at reality. We're two weeks into the rollout of the minister's plan. She won't hit the four-week target set out in the Ontario influenza pandemic plan that her government commissioned. She hasn't administered the H1N1 vaccine to everyone in the high-priority category yet, let alone everybody else in the province. The same day that she bragged about having the world's best vaccination plan, she said, "It's safe to say that what we saw in Toronto last week is simply unacceptable." Which is flawed—the minister's plan or her execution of it?

1040

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that the vaccine is getting into people as quickly as we receive it. We will not be able to reach a four-week target because we simply don't have the vaccine. Public health units across the province are reporting that—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I know members get upset with the Speaker when he misses an unparliamentary comment that may get made occasionally in this chamber. I'm finding it extremely difficult to hear the answers and the questions. I would just ask all members on both sides to have some consideration for not only us as members but for the guests that are here observing as well.

Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are moving very quickly to get the vaccine out as quickly as possible. Public health units across the province are delivering the vaccine. Our hospitals are responding to the increase in demand. We have flu assessment centres opening up across the province. We are doing extremely well on our response to this pandemic. The only thing that we are missing is a sure and steady supply of vaccine from the federal government.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The fact of the matter is that this government is not implementing the Ontario influenza pandemic plan that they commissioned, and the minister's criticism of Toronto Public Health is unacceptable. Front-line workers are looking to you for leadership and not attacks.

In response to her attack on public health officials, John Filion, a Toronto city councillor said, "Politicians shouldn't play politics with this." Minister, are you playing political blame games to change the channel?

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Whitby—Oshawa.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I was finished with my question, Mr. Speaker. Thank you.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I actually stand by my comment that the rollout in Toronto was unacceptable. I do think that having people line up for hours in the rain was not the way that that vaccine should have been rolled out. I make no apologies. If you think it was acceptable, I disagree with you. There were some very fine examples across the province where the vaccine rollout was delivered in a respectful—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. As parents watch this government's pandemic rollout, they're getting extremely anxious. They've been told that their children should be vaccinated, but then

they're told that clinics will not make school-aged children a priority. My question to the minister is a simple one: When will school-aged children get vaccinated?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is quite right that school-aged children, for medical scientific reasons, are not part of the highest-priority group. We're focused on children between the ages of six months and up to but not including five years old; we're focused on pregnant women; we're focused on people under the age of 65 who have chronic underlying conditions; we're focused on our health care workers; and we're focused on caregivers of people who, because of medical conditions or because they have a small infant, cannot be vaccinated. That is the right approach to take. We are looking forward, when we do have the availability of the vaccine, to expand the list of priority groups.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Earlier today, the Saskatchewan government announced that school-aged children from kindergarten to grade 6 are now a priority. Parents in Saskatchewan can get their kids vaccinated today. In Ontario, parents are left waiting—and they want to know, are school-aged children a priority group? And if they're not, why not?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I am taking the advice of the chief medical officer of health. Her advice and the advice across the country is that the highest-priority groups are those who will suffer the greatest complications from H1N1 if in fact they contract the virus. We are, as I say, focusing on those priority groups. The next group of priority will be announced shortly. It will include younger school-aged children. The details of that I will leave to the chief medical officer of health.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: One of the lessons that we should have learned from the SARS epidemic was the need to have a clear plan and to communicate it well. In Ontario, parents are left in the dark about plans to vaccinate their kids, while the rich and powerful can buy their way to the front of the line. If there is a plan to make school-aged children a priority, when will the parents of this province finally find out?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I understand the impatience of the member opposite; in fact, I share that. I would love to be able to tell parents today when they will be able to take their school-aged children to be vaccinated.

We are dealing with uncertainty around the timing of the supply. There will be enough vaccine for everyone, I have been repeatedly assured of that; the timing is the question. We are dealing with a real-time pandemic, and we are responding based on the best science available to us about who should go to the front of the line and when we can begin to expand to other people in the province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. Leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Uncertainty and incompetence seem to be the modus operandi of this government, I have to tell you.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is, as well, to the Minister of Health. Algoma's eHealth system has made their H1N1 vaccination program simple and seamless. This is evidence of how important an electronic health records system is for Ontario. But the development of such a system requires significant public dollars and complete transparency to ensure value for the money.

On October 29, Nightingale, an eHealth records company, told its investors of a new \$236-million deal between the McGuinty government and the OMA. My question is this: When was the government planning to tell Ontarians?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member opposite is absolutely right: If we had a fully functioning eHealth system in this province, this vaccine rollout would have been significantly easier. In some communities where they are more advanced when it comes to eHealth, they have seen much smoother response. In fact, in some communities they've been able to go into the records, find where the babies are and reach out to those children between six months and four years old to get them vaccinated.

I am delighted that we are going to be able to significantly expand the number of physicians who have access to the technology and the software that will allow them to join the ever-growing eHealth system in this province.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: For a government that has never shied away from a photo op, you'd think a \$236-million deal would warrant at least a press release from this government.

The deal was signed in July. If it wasn't supposed to be a secret, will the minister release the full list of vendors, indicate how those vendors were selected, and release the full agreement between the government and the OMA?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We are very proud of our continued commitment to rolling out eHealth. This information was, in fact, in the Auditor General's report. I urge you to look to page 32, where you will read, "The eHealth strategic plan targets a 65% EMR adoption rate by primary care physicians by April 2012, which it projects will require further funding of \$50 million in 2011 and \$77 million in 2012. Achieving the target is thus expected to cost more than \$225 million," which is what we are investing over the next three years.

It's critical to the sustainability of our health care system that physicians adopt the latest technology. We have seen how it works, we know it's the right way to go, and we are not going to lose focus on achieving that objective.

1050

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Ontarians have a right to expect full transparency on this matter and they are still not getting it from this minister. They've already seen \$1 bil-

lion in health care money go out the door with very little to show for it.

We know that in 2008 the OMA rejected a proposal that would fund doctors' transitions to eHealth records in exchange for greater accountability measures, including an independent board, government audits and open procurement.

A simple question: Does the \$236-million backroom deal include these measures to protect the public's investment?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I feel like I'm getting a little bit of whiplash here. If you'll excuse me, I've got one member of the third party saying stop it—the health critic said, “Stop this investment right away”; the other one is saying, “Let's go ahead with it.”

This is really important, and frankly I am going to proceed with the implementation of eHealth. It is the right thing to do for this province, it's the right thing to do for the people of this province; it is a safer system for people, it is a more efficient system for people, and it will save us money that we can reinvest in much-needed health services.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: My question is to the Minister of Health. When the Premier said in his media scrum yesterday that there is “fairly broad resistance amongst Ontarians in participating in the vaccination program,” it's clear that there's not. Do you agree with the Premier?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Yes, I actually do agree with the Premier. We have an ongoing challenge to communicate to people across this province that H1N1 is a serious illness and they should get vaccinated.

I know that there's been a surge of people, particularly parents of young children, who wanted the vaccine immediately, but I do believe that there is still much work to be done to convince people across the province who do not fall into those high-priority groups to get the vaccine. It's very important that everyone in this Legislature understands that H1N1 can be prevented with the vaccine, and the more people who get the vaccine, the better for all of us.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I guess the minister's interpretation of four- to six-hour lineups is “broad resistance” to this vaccination.

The Premier, if he's believed, shows how out of touch he is with the public, the front-line health workers and with reality. John Filion, a Toronto city councillor, said, “People were listening to the message and want to get vaccinated.” George Smitherman said that long lineups and wait times were a positive sign that many people wanted to get vaccinated.

In question period yesterday, the health minister admitted the big problem is that she totally underestimated public demand for the vaccine. Is the Premier clueless or just trying to change the channel from the mess the minister made?

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I would just ask the honourable member to withdraw the comment she made.

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: Withdraw.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I wish there was a really simple way to communicate the H1N1 pandemic response to people, but what the member opposite needs to understand is that we've got three different things at play. We've got a supply of vaccine—that is one issue we are watching very, very closely—we have the demand from the public, which of course is changing depending on what happens to be in the news, and there is also the issue of our capacity to deliver. I am now very pleased with our capacity to deliver the vaccine across the province. Public health units are reporting, and I have heard anecdotally as well, that when people go to the clinics, they're getting very prompt vaccinations. I'm hearing that right across the province.

We do need the supply of vaccine and we need to continue to convince Ontarians—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est également pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Hospitals have no surge capacity to meet the growing demand caused by the H1N1 flu. Hospitals in the Niagara system are cancelling surgeries. The Ontario Council of Hospital Unions says that hospitals are operating at 98% capacity or above. We all know that the vast majority of people who catch H1N1 won't need hospitalization, but right now in Ontario 11 million people have not been vaccinated. They are catching and spreading H1N1, and some of them need hospitalization. Minister, a small percentage of 11 million people makes for a lot of patients. My question is simple: What is your plan for the people who do need hospitalization after coming down with H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I'm happy to have the opportunity to report that our hospitals are coping very well. Each hospital has a plan. They are implementing that plan. Cancelling elective surgery is part of the pandemic plan. This is not business as usual for hospitals. This is not business as usual for our health care sector. This is a global pandemic. We are responding to it in a very measured and excellent way. The hospitals are rolling out their pandemic plans. We have approximately 90 people who are in hospital today as a result of H1N1. We've had over 600 come into hospital, and 500 of those have left hospital. Our hospitals are coping, but it is not business as usual.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: My 87-year-old mother-in-law broke her foot. She was sent to Sudbury Regional Hospital to get a cast. The waiting room was so packed with people with flu symptoms that the triage nurse decided

that it was safer to send her home with her foot fracture than to have her wait her turn in the emergency department to get her cast on.

Let's go have a look at the website of Sudbury Regional Hospital. We all know there are 129 ALC patients in there, nine patients on ventilators in critical care, 77 in isolation because of the flu, 21 surgeries cancelled in the last two days; this is, yesterday and the day before. Seventeen patients are in the emergency department as we speak right now waiting for a bed. My question is simple: Is turning away a frail, elderly, 87-year-old woman with a fractured foot part of the minister's plan to deal with the surge in H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me start by saying I'm sorry to hear that your mother-in-law has fractured her foot. I trust she is going to get the excellent care she deserves, as does everyone else.

One of the things that is happening across the province is that we're opening up flu assessment centres. These are centres that are specifically for people with flu-like symptoms, where they can go have their condition assessed and can get started on Tamiflu if that's what is recommended. This is taking the pressure off our emergency rooms. It is part of our plan, and I'm very pleased with how it's working.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mrs. Laura Albanese: To the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care: In previous questions to the minister, this House has heard about the government's extensive efforts to confront the challenges posed by H1N1. Public health care workers across the province are working strenuously to immunize as many people as they can in the identified priority groups and in the shortest time possible. The vaccine is the best prevention tool that we have. Yet once H1N1 has been contracted, doctors prescribe Tamiflu. Some serious concerns raised by parents of York South-Weston, and in particular by a father whose daughter has a pre-existing asthma condition, relate to the lack of pediatric Tamiflu in pharmacies across the GTA. Can the minister assure us that all efforts are being made to accelerate the delivery of pediatric Tamiflu to pharmacies across Ontario so that—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you, Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I sure do understand the concerns of the father who is concerned about his child. I am a mom; I understand how parents will fight for the best interests of their children. I'm very pleased to report that we now have delivered pediatric Tamiflu to 3,200 community pharmacies in Ontario, including many in the greater Toronto area. There have been some challenges with the supply, and I know this has been very concerning for parents. With this delivery, we're ensuring that the drug is more widely available for when a doctor prescribes it for a child who is sick with H1N1. There are also methods that pharmacists can use to convert the adult Tamiflu into a child's dosage. I will talk about that more in the supplementary.

1100

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Laura Albanese: I would like to address another question to the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care on the same topic.

As the minister mentioned, other products may be used by pharmacists to create the children's dosage of Tamiflu, such as Ora-Sweet, the product used to convert Tamiflu into the sweet liquid solution given to children, but these products are also lacking in supply.

Given that our province is also waiting for the manufacturer of pediatric capsules of Tamiflu for children aged one and older to ramp up their stock and accelerate delivery, when can fathers and mothers across Ontario expect to find a plentiful supply of pediatric Tamiflu and related products on the shelves of their local pharmacies?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: We do understand that there is more to do on this, and one way to increase access to Tamiflu is by converting those adult capsules into the children's dosage. The ministry has provided pharmacies with guidance on how to convert these doses using a product called Ora-Sweet. However, unfortunately, there's a shortage of this product as well.

This is, as I said, a global pandemic we are dealing with. That's why we've been working with the Ontario Pharmacists' Association to advise pharmacists about possible alternatives to Ora-Sweet. We've been informed that the Ontario order for Ora-Sweet will be arriving within days, helping ramp up access to Tamiflu.

I do want to thank the member for York South-Weston and other members of the House for having raised this issue. I look forward to continuing to work with you to increase access to pediatric Tamiflu for kids in this province.

ELECTRONIC HEALTH INFORMATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Premier called the obstruction of the Auditor General's investigation into the ministry an "unfortunate slip." The auditor gave notice of his intention to audit the Ministry of Health in August 2008 and wasn't let in until February 2009, so the slip lasted six months.

Minister, it's hard to believe your assistant deputy minister wouldn't be familiar with section 10 of the Auditor General Act, which puts a duty on the ministry to hand over information and access to records the auditor believes are necessary. What disciplinary action have you taken with Mr. McKinley for obstructing the auditor's investigation into the billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that as soon as my deputy became aware, through a phone call from the Auditor General, that there was an issue, that issue was resolved immediately.

I do know that the deputy and others have been called before the public accounts committee. They have been very open and forthcoming in their responsiveness.

We welcomed the report from the Auditor General. He gave us some very important recommendations. We have

responded to those recommendations and are following up on implementing each and every one of the recommendations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's really not that simple because shortly after the auditor gave notice of his intention to audit the Ministry of Health, Mr. McKinley was installed as ADM. His predecessor wasn't implicated in the decision to obstruct the auditor. Mr. McKinley was the first to break the law by violating section 10 of the Auditor General Act.

It makes no sense for a senior bureaucrat, just appointed to the program, to break the law. Public servants don't put their careers in jeopardy for nothing. It makes no sense that no one inside the government knew what was happening for months. It also makes no sense that no action has been taken against Mr. McKinley or anyone else who broke the law.

Minister, if you and the Premier won't ask the hard questions, why not appoint a public inquiry that will and investigate this matter and get to the bottom of it?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I know the members of the opposition have been calling for a public inquiry. I am convinced that that is an issue that would not shine more light on to this issue. We have had significant changes that have been made in our procurement policies as a result of the auditor's report. I think the political interference—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. Minister?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: If the member opposite is arguing that we should discipline our public service, I think she would characterize that as political interference. I can tell you that members of the Ministry of Health have been working very, very hard to implement the changes. We are moving full-steam ahead on the implementation of eHealth. It's very—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. I'm content to stand here all day. New question.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Michael Prue: My question is for the Minister of Community and Social Services. Why are Ontario Works and Ontario disability recipients being told that they must pay for Tamiflu out of their own pockets when they go to the pharmacy with a doctor's prescription in their hands?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you to the member for this question. I'm very surprised that that's what they're told, because Tamiflu, I'm told by the Minister of Health, is free for everyone. So if there is some concern and if you have examples, please bring them to my attention and I will look into them.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Michael Prue: We have countless stories, and we've been told that pharmacists have been given batches

of Tamiflu to give without charge to Ontario drug benefit recipients who are prescribed the drug as part of this recent pandemics protocol. Yet people are contacting us, saying that they have been asked to pay for Tamiflu.

Given this pandemic, has this government informed each and every pharmacist, every doctor and every ODSP and OW client that Tamiflu be given free of charge to everyone who needs it? And has the government given adequate supplies of this drug to pharmacies across the province so they can dispense it without charge?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Thank you again for the question, for bringing that to our attention. It's our understanding that every pharmacist is aware that it's free of charge—not just for those on social assistance, but for every Ontarian. We will look into it, and if you have any examples, please bring them to our attention and we will specifically talk to these pharmacists.

IMMIGRANT SERVICES

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: My question is for the Minister of Citizenship and Immigration. Recently, the Toronto Star reported on a study led by Toronto's St. Michael's Hospital under the headline that one third of Toronto's homeless population are immigrants. The study looked at over 1,000 individuals in shelters and meal programs and concluded that 32% were immigrants and almost a quarter of those had mental health issues.

Minister, this is an issue that I have been active with for some time in my riding of Ottawa Centre. Just this past September, I met with the Ottawa Chinese Community Service Centre, specifically regarding their concerns on mental health services and opportunities for Ottawa's immigrant communities. Specifically, they have been working hard as members of the multicultural mental health services working group, which is comprised of 20 community health and resource centres, immigrant settlement organizations, multicultural community groups and mental health organizations in Ottawa, to better understand the issue and make recommendations.

Minister, will you commit to supporting these individuals to break barriers and find work opportunities so immigrants with mental health issues are no longer isolated or stigmatized?

Hon. Michael Chan: I want to thank the honourable member from Ottawa Centre for his question. To newcomers, upon their arrival, Ontario is a new land, a new culture, a new language and a new way of life for them. They also face challenges in securing a job. This is why our government has invested hundreds of millions of dollars in many bridge training programs, supporting over 30,000 newcomers.

Through the Office of the Fairness Commissioner, we are making access to regulated professions more open and fair. For example, the Ontario College of Pharmacists, the Ontario College of Teachers, and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario are all taking action to improve access.

There's more to do and we are moving on the right track.

1110

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Immigrants come to this great country to join with us as productive and contributing members of our society and economy, but mental health problems can derail all of that if not properly understood or treated. Indeed, we all know that newcomers face a number of particular challenges and obstacles when they arrive in Canada that can be catalysts for mental health challenges to arise. Furthermore, both the Canadian Mental Health Association and Ottawa's multicultural mental health services working group state that there are very real cultural barriers to seeking treatment or assistance for immigrants with mental health problems, such as: the perceived or actual social stigma of mental illness; a lack of understanding of mental illness and mental health services available; language and cultural barriers to accessing services; fear of diagnosis or treatment, or of being denied employment or housing if mental health problems are identified. Minister, will you take steps to identify solutions to eradicate stigma, negative cultural perceptions and the prejudices that revolve around mental health issues in our cultural communities?

Hon. Michael Chan: Newcomers travel thousands of miles and face many hurdles to reach our province. I know first-hand of their challenges. That's why we have invested in settlement services, language training, bridge training and credential recognition. By investing in these areas we are helping newcomers transition to their new home and develop skills that are necessary to succeed in Ontario. We have also consistently consulted with immigrant communities and our service providers to better understand the challenges faced in these communities. The consultations will support the Ministry of Health to develop a mental health strategy that includes the needs of the immigrant population. Our collective prosperity relies on the success of our newcomers, and our government knows it.

TAXATION

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: My question is for the Deputy Premier. On two occasions in this House, your Minister of Revenue was asked if the new HST will increase the cost of playing sports such as hockey. He responded by saying that recreational memberships or fees would generally be exempt from the HST. Minister, I've seen and, quite frankly, heard you skate, and you should know well that memberships and registration fees do not constitute the majority portion of the cost of playing sports. My son's registration fee was \$200. Yet I pay \$2,000 in ice rental fees, 10 times the registration fee. What was neglected to be mentioned was that when the ice registration fees come in and the HST comes in, that will increase the cost by 8% next summer.

Minister, in this economy you should understand the financial pressures on parents with kids in sports. Are you going to allow exemptions for youth ice rental fees to minimize the impact on minor hockey?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I think most Ontario parents will benefit from the personal tax cut that they're going to get, that will more than offset these kinds of issues. Our comprehensive package of the HST and tax cuts will—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Stop the clock. The member from Hamilton East would be wiser to be in his seat.

Minister.

Hon. Dwight Duncan: That package will create jobs that will employ people and help this economy grow and get out of the difficult circumstances we find ourselves in. I think parents across Ontario want the best for their children. I agree with the member opposite. That's why the policy we're pursuing will create jobs, create a growth environment and will in fact help Ontario build back as we move out of the downturn in the world economy into a position of growth again.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: The answer was yes, you can expect an 8% increase on your ice fees. Minister, we are leading into an Olympic year, and the impact of the economy has hugely affected recreational sports participation by youth. Hockey numbers are way down and it's expected to get worse while the government's job-loss funding dries up. Minister, does your government have any programs coming out that will assist organizations to counter the increased cost of the HST and help those organizations keep kids in their respective sports?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Several moments ago, in Niagara-on-the-Lake, my colleague the Minister of Revenue, along with Jack Mintz, noted world economist, released the following report. Here's what Mr. Mintz says. Jack Mintz says, "Within 10 years, Ontario will benefit from increased capital investment of \$47 billion" as a result of our policies. Mr. Mintz also says—and I'll remind my heckling colleagues opposite that this is the same Mr. Mintz whom your leader has endorsed as one of the best economists in the country—that our policies will increase worker incomes in 10 years by \$29.4 billion. Most important, Mr. Mintz says that this policy will create an estimated 591,000 net new jobs in Ontario. That's what this—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The Minister of Finance will come to order.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Following question period yesterday, the health minister told the media that the H1N1 vaccine rolled out to First Nations communities was a shining example of how well the system works. Today, the Globe and Mail reports that the H1N1 vaccine is arriving too late in many First Nations communities: One in 15 First Nations people are already sick with the flu. Children are

being hospitalized, but First Nations are still waiting for adequate supplies of the vaccine. Is this really and truly the minister's definition of a shining success?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can tell you that, first of all, of course, I'm concerned about the situations with our First Nations, particularly in the remote fly-in communities. We did get an oversupply of vaccine to them as quickly as we could. I do want to say, though, that the supply of the vaccine is not within our control. We have shipped far more than their per capita share to those First Nations, but there are people who are getting sick with H1N1.

I have spoken to the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs about this and I will refer the supplementary to him, as he has an update from the community this morning.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: Health units are responsible for delivering the H1N1 vaccine to First Nations communities, and the health units are a provincial responsibility. First Nations communities, in fact, were told that they were a high priority for vaccine supply, but Stan Beardy, Grand Chief of Nishnawbe Aski Nation, says that his 49 communities have only received half of the vaccines that they were promised. Why are high-priority First Nations people experiencing such a delay?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: To the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: It's pretty obvious that the leader of the third party didn't listen to the original answer from our Minister of Health. I'm sure she knows that Health Canada's First Nations and Inuit health branch and the Public Health Agency of Canada have the lead for health response to H1N1 influenza in First Nations communities. But there is an unprecedented level of collaboration going on between the two governments. I did have the opportunity to speak to a chief from a community that is experiencing some real challenges just before question period. The vaccination is being administered. It is still being administered today. There is a teleconference being scheduled this afternoon to assess the situation further to determine when additional doses will be available.

We are working very closely with those communities. We communicate with them at every opportunity. We will continue to advocate with the federal government to ensure that the response is there and is fulsome.

1120

FULL-DAY KINDERGARTEN

Mr. Bob Delaney: This question is for the Minister of Education. Western Mississauga is home to thousands of young families, and they send their children to our province's publicly funded schools. Ontario's full-day learning announcement would provide the option of full-day learning for our province's four- and five-year-olds. Our parents are interested in this initiative and they like the idea of a seamless school day for their children, but some parents have contacted us and asked why the program would not be available in all schools next September.

Would the minister please outline how Ontario plans to move ahead to implement full-day learning across the province?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: There's a broad consensus that early learning is one of the most important investments we can make in our children and our economy. Former Premier Bill Davis; Don Drummond, chief economist at TD Bank; Sid Ryan, president of CUPE—I think we've got a broad consensus there. It's about setting our kids on the road to success, and we want to make sure we get it right.

Our goal is to have the program fully implemented in all schools by 2015-16. This timeline will ensure that the resources are not overstretched and that school boards and local governments have sufficient time to hire staff, build facilities and work with local partners, because there isn't space in every single community to implement this.

Next September, we're planning to implement it in schools that already have appropriate space to accommodate additional classes, and in communities where there's both child care need and socio-economic need. We've asked all school boards to recommend the communities that would be most appropriate to begin.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Bob Delaney: In addition to families in western Mississauga and all over Ontario with four- and five-year-olds who are anxious to get their kids into full-day learning, we also have families with younger children who are wondering what kind of child care options will be available to them.

In our ridings, we have some daycare operators who make a very good living providing high-quality, affordable child care who are also concerned. Some of these child care operators are wondering about the ongoing viability of their business and what it will do to the families who otherwise make up their market.

With some 35,000 four- and five-year-olds moving from child care operators into our schools next year, and the rest to follow, what is Ontario doing to ensure that our parents will have options for their kids under four, and how will we provide stability to the child care sector?

Hon. Kathleen O. Wynne: To the Minister of Children and Youth Services.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: This initiative is so exciting for Ontario's kids. But we do know that every single day, dedicated professionals across the province who are knowledgeable and loving help families give Ontario kids the best start. That's why we're committed to maintaining and enhancing child care services for kids and families, because we know how important they are. We know that moving to a universal full-day learning program for four- and five-year-olds will affect how child care programs are delivered and that these impacts will vary across the regions. So the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Children and Youth Services will be working with municipalities, school boards and child care operators to minimize the impact on existing child

care programs and to enhance the care available for children under four. We're going to review such issues as subsidies, capital funding, and potential changes to legislation to make sure that Ontario kids from zero to four and beyond get the best—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CASINO EMPLOYEES

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: My question today is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Casino Rama is the largest single-site employer of our First Nations brothers and sisters in our country. You know that the operating and development agreement for Casino Rama expires in the fall of 2011. Minister, can you explain to the House what you are doing to have the agreement renewed in order to protect the jobs of both aboriginals and non-aboriginals in Ontario?

Hon. Brad Duguid: Let me start off by saying how proud we were and are as a government that we've been able to reach a gaming agreement, which we did about a year and a half or so ago. This is going to ensure that billions of dollars flow into First Nation communities right across this province, and it's going to provide much-needed support for economic development activities, investments in infrastructure, and investments in many of the different needs in First Nation communities that, at this point in time, have been unaddressed on many occasions, mostly due to lack of investment on the part of the federal government.

We're going to continue to work towards these agreements. The gaming agreement is indeed in place. It's good news for aboriginal communities, it continues to be good news for aboriginal communities, and it's another step forward in our efforts to build stronger First Nations communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Garfield Dunlop: I just want to remind the minister, I was speaking specifically of Casino Rama.

Minister, we all know the dramatic changes and controversy surrounding the OLG under the watch of the McGuinty Liberals, and there's no doubt that there has been a lack of trust created. Historically, Casino Rama is the most profitable commercial gaming casino in Canada, and the general public are concerned and anxious to find out when the operating and development agreement will be renewed. We're not talking about old agreements; we're talking about the new agreement. Minister, can you tell the House today when your government will announce the new agreement? It's plain and simple. We just need a date.

Hon. Brad Duguid: These things take time to reach fruition. They are complex agreements and they continue to be worked on. The fact is, if you look at the last year in this province, we've seen more advancement. We've seen more progress made in working in partnership with

First Nations communities than we've seen probably in this province in the last 40 years.

Just last week, and I'm very pleased to be able to say this, Ontario brought all aboriginal affairs ministers from across every province in this country, every territory, the federal aboriginal affairs minister, as well as five national aboriginal groups, to Ontario so we could work on issues like economic development, so we could work together on issues like improving education. It all fits in together.

I appreciate the member's question. It will be done as soon as it possibly can be. We're working together, though, to move forward with First Nations communities—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

MUNICIPAL FINANCES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: My question is to the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

Interjections.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: There we go. We know you've been waiting for a question.

My question is very simple. Communities across my riding are hearing from all different sources that the Ontario municipal partnership fund is going to be reduced this year for the community of Opatatika. They will go from \$263,000 in OMPF funding to \$150,000. Can you confirm in this House today that will not be the case?

Hon. Jim Watson: Let me thank the honourable member from Timmins—James Bay for the opportunity to talk about some of the investments that the McGuinty government has made with the municipal sector. When we signed an historic agreement with the municipal sector a year ago last week, one of the commitments we made was that the Minister of Finance would provide mitigation funding for this fiscal year, which we did, but that we would undertake a review of the Ontario municipal partnership fund, which the Minister of Finance is doing in concert with AMO and our municipal partners.

I can say, however, that in the interim we have already uploaded the Ontario drug plan, 100% of that cost, saving municipalities close to \$165 million; we've uploaded 50% of ODSP costs, which is saving tens of millions of dollars; and we continue to upload over the length of the agreement, to the benefit of all municipalities in the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: To the minister: I've called each municipality in my riding and they're telling me what you have done is not revenue-equal. Their fear is the OMPF is going to be reduced, all of those communities are going to be hit, and the offsets they're supposed to get on the upload are not equalizing. So I put the question to you. Just cut to the chase. Tell me no, you will not cut the OMPF this year.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to report a couple of things that would be of interest to the honourable member and his constituents. In Timmins, OMPF funding

totalled \$14.3 million, which was a record amount of money, well beyond the old community reinvestment fund. The total upload benefit, when fully uploaded as a result of the historic agreement the McGuinty government signed in partnership with our municipal partners, will be 3.7 million net new dollars for the good people of Timmins.

We're proud of the arrangements that we've made with the municipal sector. We're working in partnership with them and I know the Minister of Finance will communicate with the municipal community—the 440 municipalities—on the status of the Ontario municipal partnership fund. We've been there with them in the past; we'll be there with them in the future.

1130

ARTS AND CULTURAL FUNDING

Mr. Rick Johnson: My question is for the Minister of Culture. For over 100 years, the Royal Conservatory of Music has provided the finest music education to millions of Canadians in virtually every community in the country. Every year, 500,000 people in 300 communities participate in the Royal Conservatory's world-renowned programs.

After years of renovations and construction, the Royal Conservatory recently opened the doors of its stunning new Koerner Hall. Koerner Hall has attracted significant media attention since it opened a few weeks ago. Today, as part of this month's royal tour, the Duchess of Cornwall will be touring the Royal Conservatory of Music, including the new Koerner Hall.

Can the Minister of Culture tell this House what investments this government has made in the new Koerner Hall?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Thank you to my honourable colleague. It was just simply a great pleasure to attend the opening of Koerner Hall. With its outstanding acoustics and phenomenal design, it's adding yet one more landmark of the cultural world's rooting here in the city.

I was also delighted that Her Royal Highness has chosen Koerner Hall to visit. She should do so; I'm sure she'll be delighted in what she sees and what she hears.

We're delighted because we have supported the Royal Conservatory of Music and Koerner Hall with \$16 million of investment to assist them in the restoration and the expansion.

At the time of the opening, I had the opportunity to announce a further investment of \$5 million to enable the conservatory to continue to invest, promote and provide their—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Rick Johnson: Over the past decade, Toronto has undergone a remarkable cultural renaissance. The results have been an unprecedented building and architectural transformation of many of Ontario's renowned cultural institutions, including the Royal Conservatory of Music.

The National Ballet School has become a glittering new centre for arts education. A new elegant home was built for Toronto's opera and ballet companies. The Gardiner Museum was expanded and re-landscaped with a bold new image. The ROM expanded its facilities with the addition of the Michael Lee-Chin Crystal, and Frank Gehry transformed the Art Gallery of Ontario, which has generated international praise. Collectively, the Ontario government has invested \$123 million towards Toronto's cultural renaissance.

Can the Minister of Culture explain why the government has invested so much funding in Toronto's cultural renaissance and why it is so important to Ontario?

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: Again I thank my honourable colleague for his insight into the fact that the cultural sector is an integral part of making our economy more prosperous and more competitive.

The cultural sector plays a key role in that it generates \$20 billion in the GDP of this province. Our sector is one of the fastest-growing in the Ontario economy. Cultural tourism creates or generates \$4.6 billion annually for the provincial economy, and it creates hundreds of thousands of jobs, a subject I know the opposition is particularly attuned to. By investing as this government has in each of the wonderful cultural agencies and attractions my colleague has described, it enables this city and enables this province to simply be a jewel in the Canadian crown.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Frank Klees: To the Minister of Health: I wonder if the Minister of Health could help us with a very practical issue relating to H1N1. Ontarians would like to know what the protocol is. From the time that someone is suspected of having contracted H1N1, what is the process to confirm that? What is the testing process? Where is that test confirmed and what is the turnaround from the time that swab is taken until we have that confirmation?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I confess that I am not a medical doctor and I do not have the answer to that question, but I certainly will undertake to get it for you.

What I can tell you, though, is that we have some very good news this week in our fight against H1N1 in that we now have 86,000 doses of the unadjuvanted vaccine that is now, across the province, distributed for pregnant women. I'm very happy to be able to tell you that pregnant women across the province will have an ample supply of vaccine. Different public health units are setting up their protocol for that, delivering it to high-volume obstetricians, setting up clinics specifically for pregnant women. That is just one more step in our fight against H1N1.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: I would have thought that the Minister of Health would understand what the very practical protocol is.

The reason I ask this question is that the son of one of my constituents was in hospital, segregated, for more

than 10 days. The swab was taken, and it took almost two weeks for the test results to be brought back. There's only one place in Canada that does the testing, and that's in Winnipeg. I would hope that, in this province, we would have a system in place that would at least accelerate the delivery of these tests to ensure that we know what is going on in this province relative to H1N1 and so that there's an efficient process that we can all rely on.

Hon. Deborah Matthews: As I said, I will look into the particulars of that question, but what I do know is that almost all the people with flu-like symptoms that we are now seeing do, in fact, have H1N1. So we don't need to test everyone right now.

I would recommend that people go to a flu assessment centre, that they take the advice of the health care professionals, and that, if they are sick, they stay home. No matter how strong that work ethic is, it's important to stay home if you're sick to protect the other people that you are working with.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est encore pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée.

We know that the first pillar in the fight against H1N1 is vaccination. Well, if you can't get the vaccination and, unfortunately, you get the disease, then the second pillar is to get quick access to an antiviral, mostly known as Tamiflu.

I was able to find that the government has distributed about a third of their supply to 3,200 pharmacies throughout the province. What I'm not able to find is a plan for equitable access. We don't know where those 3,200 pharmacies are located, but I can tell you that there's an equity-of-access issue in northeastern Ontario.

I'd like to ask the minister, what is your plan for equitable access for distribution of free Tamiflu antiviral to all of the pharmacies outside of the big centres, but more particularly to northeastern Ontario?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: The member is right that Tamiflu is available at no cost to people who have been prescribed Tamiflu. That is actually above and beyond the call of duty for us, but the right thing to do because we want to get people treated as quickly as possible.

The Tamiflu has been distributed across the province. If there is a particular supply issue in a particular area, I would like to know about it, and we'll take whatever steps we need to to ensure that people have access to it. We have ordered enough Tamiflu to treat 25% of the entire population. That is ample supply of Tamiflu. If it's not being distributed properly, I would like to know about it, and we'll fix the problem.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Gilles Bisson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I rise on a point of order in regards to section 37, and there are two points that I want to make here.

The first point is that section 37(d) says, "In putting an oral question, no argument or opinion is to be offered nor any facts stated, except so far as may be necessary to explain the same; and in answering any such question, the member is not to debate the matter to which it refers." Clearly, a number of the questions that are put forward contravene that section.

Also, the second point: I've been timing question period and watching, other than the lead questions, the questions that come after the leaders. On average, the opposition members have been taking 40 to 45 seconds in asking their questions. What is clear is that the government, in asking their questions, rag the puck up to over a minute if they can get there, and when it comes to the ministers, they're doing the same. Today, we were fortunate to be able to get to question seven.

My point, Mr. Speaker: I would ask you to be somewhat more diligent and watch the timing. If the opposition is being careful in the time that they use in asking questions, we would ask that the government do the same.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): A couple of points. I'll start with the second one.

We were able to, today, get 18 questions in. I will say there are two of us, at least, watching the clocks. I keep tabs on everything. I am very conscious of saying, with 10 seconds, "Question" or "Answer." You can raise your point. I will not consider that a point of order other than to say that I am very conscious of trying to keep those questions within a minute each way.

Regarding your second point, I will remind members of a ruling that I made on June 4, 2009, regarding standing order 37(a). I won't reread the whole of that ruling, but let's just say that I recognize that one man's pothole could be another man's crater and that, in some people's minds, the investments of millions of dollars in cultural facilities, as the one question related to today, could be seen as a very important stimulus to the economy. I do listen very closely to those government questions and I really would continue to urge government members to take heed of something being of "urgent public importance." It is important, but it is a challenge: In one member's mind that was an issue of urgent public importance.

Hon. James J. Bradley: On a similar point of order to the member, Mr. Speaker: I feel it would be insulting to members of the opposition when they ask questions if I, as a minister, were not to give a complete answer to the question. That's why I find the minute limits me very much.

CORRECTION OF RECORD

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I would like to correct a figure that I used in the response to a question. As of yesterday, there are 707 confirmed cases of H1N1 that have been hospitalized, and of those, 599 cases have been discharged, leaving 108 people with confirmed cases of H1N1 in our hospitals across the province today.

USE OF QUESTION PERIOD

Mr. Frank Klees: On the same point of order that the Minister of Transportation just made, Mr. Speaker: I want to assure the minister that we are in fact insulted, because we very seldom get any answers when we put them to the government. I would just appeal to him and his colleagues to realize that question period is that, and we do expect answers. So if he doesn't want to be insulted, give us the answers.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I want to thank the honourable members for their comments. I would just encourage that if there is agreement amongst the members of the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly, I think a comprehensive review of question period would be most welcome, but I will leave it to the Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly to have those discussions.

There being no further business, this House stands recessed until 3 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1143 to 1500.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Mr. John O'Toole: It's my distinct pleasure to invite members to recognize my lovely wife Peggy, who is visiting here today. I think it's the first time in 14 years that she's actually been here. Welcome, Peggy.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

REMEMBRANCE DAY PHOTO EXHIBIT

Mr. John O'Toole: It is my privilege today to pay tribute to a new exhibit at the Bowmanville library entitled Vets and Cadets: My Photos and Your Words. This show is by Kristin McCrae, a talented photographer from my riding of Durham, who has photographed local veterans and cadets over many years. The unique feature of this exhibit is that it is interactive: Visitors are invited to view the photographs and then respond with their own thoughts and reflections on our veterans and the cadets. The words from those who see the photos will complete the work.

The display of 14 black-and-white photos will be in the Bowmanville library Artspace on the Mezzanine throughout November. The mezzanine gallery is a joint partnership of the Visual Arts Centre of Clarington and the Clarington Public Library, located in the municipal town centre.

I would like to commend Kristin McCrae for a truly creative venture that encourages us to reflect on the meaning of remembrance and be inspired by her photographs, Vets and Cadets.

Today, in Queen's Park's clippings, the cover features four reflections on Remembrance Day, which is next Wednesday, the 11th. One of the features is on John W.

Foote, VC, who was the MPP from my riding of Durham from 1948 to 1959. He was the only Victoria Cross recipient to have served here at Queen's Park.

To all the veterans and those who served Canada in the wars and in other ways, thank you.

ANIMAL PROTECTION

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I rise today to pay tribute to the wonderful animal rescue work that is being done in my community of Scarborough Southwest. I have had the privilege of meeting a number of people in my riding who rescue cats, dogs and wildlife through their own compassion and with their own resources. Gandhi once said that the greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated. This rescue work exemplifies the compassion, humanity and kindness in my own community.

There is one rescue group that takes care of what is known as the Scarborough Bluffs cat colony. In the Scarborough Bluffs area there are about 16 cats that are considered feral but who have benefited from the help of volunteer rescue workers who selflessly give their time and money to treat these animals. In addition, the volunteers help to rescue defenceless cats and kittens that are dumped at the bluffs colony by irresponsible owners. I'd like to pay special tribute to the rescue work of Judy Wilson, Robert Brydges, Doreen Montgomery, Jim Masterson, Russell and Barb Parsons, Wendy Gibson, Peter Eno and many others.

I have heard from countless constituents who have found abandoned cats or litters of kittens under their porches or around their homes. The ultimate answer to this growing overpopulation problem is to spay and neuter cats and dogs.

There is a saying that saving the life of one animal may not change the world, but for that one animal it is the world. I want to thank all those who help save stray animals across all of Ontario and, again, remind people how important it is to have your own cat or dog spayed or neutered.

ELK MANAGEMENT

Mr. Jerry J. Ouellette: Last week, the government introduced Bill 212. This bill, if passed, would authorize the Minister of Natural Resources to issue harassment, capture and kill permits for wild elk in Ontario.

For those who don't know, elk are magnificent animals that have been reintroduced back into Ontario, and I'm proud to be a member of the former government which initiated the elk restoration plan back in 1997, along with key partners such as the First Nations, the Rocky Mountain Elk Foundation, the anglers and hunters, and numerous other supporters and volunteers. From 1998-2001, elk from Alberta were released into Ontario at four sites, and the Bancroft population has grown to a self-sustaining population of well over 500 animals.

Our caucus understands and appreciates the ability of farmers and landowners to protect their property, crops and livestock. Management of elk should be approved through the co-operation of the MNR, but we are opposed to the issuance of kill permits. Elk should not be considered a nuisance animal, and this bill sets an alarming precedent, given that the MNR has not even finished developing an elk management strategy for Ontario.

It would have been much more appropriate for the government to move forward with an elk strategy and first consider a carefully controlled hunt for elk as a means to manage the entire population, assist landowners and provide hunting opportunities that help stimulate revenues to manage the elk program.

Partners and stakeholders have been urging the MNR for some time to move ahead with its elk plan and initiate a limited hunt for 2010. I would advise the government to amend this bill and immediately introduce an elk management plan for Ontario, to the benefit of all Ontarians.

TAKE OUR KIDS TO WORK DAY

Mr. Reza Moridi: Today is Take Our Kids to Work Day. This is a wonderful initiative that started 15 years ago and continues to give students access to workplaces across the province.

Today, grade 9 students in Ontario will visit the workplaces of their parents, relatives and volunteers. This program helps students gain a better understanding of what it's like to participate in Ontario's workplaces. It also helps them access information about careers that may interest them so they can make informed decisions about their education and the future ahead of them. What's more, this initiative also impresses upon students the importance of staying in school. It even helps give them an appreciation for the hard work their parents do to earn a living and support their families.

This program will benefit many students across the province and will help them prepare for entering Ontario's workforce when they finish their education.

In today's highly competitive and globalized economy, taking our kids to work today is another part of ensuring Ontario will have a powerful workforce that keeps our province strong in the years to come.

TIFFANY WHITE

Ms. Lisa MacLeod: I am very proud to congratulate today Tiffany White from Nepean-Carleton. Tiffany, just last month, was awarded the Commitment to Care and Service Award for pharmacy technician initiatives.

The Commitment to Care and Service Award recognizes exemplary dedication by pharmacy technicians in assisting staff to enhance patient care and improve pharmacy workflow. Tiffany has only been working as a pharmacy technician for a couple of years and has already distinguished herself through her hard work and commitment to better serve patients.

I'd like to take this opportunity not only to congratulate my constituent Tiffany White but also to thank all pharmacy staff across Ontario for the work they do to improve patient care and to encourage not only Tiffany but all of them to keep up the good work that they do.

At a time when we're dealing with a national pandemic—international, indeed—it is so important that our front-line health care workers know that they have the support of this chamber. So I'd like to encourage Tiffany to keep up the great work. I know that she and so many others have a bright future ahead of them.

MUNICIPAL FINANCE

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Imagine how municipalities are feeling across the province as they look at what is happening in regard to the funding they're going to be receiving in this upcoming budget year. We've had in this House now at least a couple of questions from myself, along with, I think, the Conservative opposition asking a similar number of questions to the Minister of Municipal Affairs, the Minister of Finance and the Premier in regard to what's going to happen to the municipal partnership fund this year.

I heard clearly this afternoon the Minister of Municipal Affairs rave on about how the uploading was going to be revenue-neutral for the city of Timmins and other municipalities in my riding and that we should not be worried.

Here is the math: The city of Timmins gets about \$14 million in OMPF funding. The province has re-uploaded \$3.5 million worth of services back to the province, but they're about to lose close to \$5 million of their Ontario municipal partnership fund, leaving a gap of \$1 million to \$1.5 million, depending on how you calculate it.

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For towns like Smooth Rock Falls, Kapuskasing, Hearst, Opasatika and others, this is going to create an extreme amount of pressure on their budgets, to the point that the municipalities of Opasatika, Mattice and others are telling me that if the government moves forward with the reduction of OMPF funding, as they are hearing, then they are going to hand you the keys to the municipality, because they will not be able to run the services in those municipalities, either hard or soft services, if OMPF is touched in the way that you're going to.

BREAST CANCER

Mr. David Zimmer: On Sunday, November 22, the North York General Hospital and Bayview Village Shopping Centre are holding their ninth annual Heart of Fashion exclusive shopping event, with proceeds benefiting patients and families served by North York General Hospital's Karen, Heather and Lynn Steinberg Breast Services.

Unfortunately, too many women across Ontario are diagnosed with breast cancer, many of whom seek care at North York General Hospital. Heart of Fashion is an

opportunity to participate in a wonderful event and to lend your financial support to a leading community teaching hospital. Heart of Fashion offers shoppers what's "haute" in the world of fashion, beauty, dining and home decor. Over the past eight years, the generosity of this event has raised over \$1 million for patients at North York General Hospital.

Attendees of the Heart of Fashion will experience four of the grandest international fashion destinations—New York, London, Paris and Los Angeles—all in Willowdale at the Bayview Village. While travelling between the four themed fashion zones, attendees will delight in the evening of in-store discounts, gourmet food and a fantastic fashion show.

This is a great way to support cancer care. Please come; you're all invited.

INFRASTRUCTURE PROGRAM FUNDING

Mr. Yasir Naqvi: Thank you for the opportunity to rise in the House today to share with my constituents of Ottawa Centre some of the vital infrastructure investments we have been making in Ottawa, along with our federal, municipal and community partners.

Since early 2009, we and our other partners have invested a total of over \$457.5 million to upgrade our infrastructure and support the economy in Ottawa during difficult economic times. These investments have been spread across three sectors: infrastructure, recreation and post-secondary education. We have invested \$250 million in infrastructure projects such as roads, bridges, public transit, sewers and water systems, but we have also invested in important cultural projects, like \$250,000 towards building the Chinatown gateway and \$3 million to renovate local libraries such as the Sunnyside branch in my riding.

We have also invested \$24 million to improve recreation facilities across our city through the recreational infrastructure Canada program. Two great examples among many are the Rideau Canoe Club, which is receiving \$1.8 million, and the YMCA/YWCA, which will be receiving \$6 million to improve their facilities. We also are giving \$14.8 million to the city of Ottawa for improvements to public recreation spaces such as the Hintonburg Community Centre and Hintonburg Park, for replacing the McKellar Park Community House, and for improving Parkdale Urban Park and fieldhouse.

I am especially pleased that we are investing \$158.5 million for our university campuses through the knowledge infrastructure program. In particular—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I want to acknowledge the excellent work of our local health unit and Dr. Paul Roumeliotis in responding to the H1N1 flu virus. Dr. Paul is the eastern Ontario chief medical officer. During the first three days of its H1N1 immunization clinics, the

Eastern Ontario Health Unit successfully immunized over 20,700 residents. For the most part, the six clinics operated smoothly.

By this evening, the Eastern Ontario Health Unit will have delivered another 4,200 vaccines to hospital residents and health care providers. The health unit will run 12 clinics over Thursday and Friday, and they anticipate vaccinating up to another 15,000 people. By Friday of this week, the health unit should have vaccinated almost 40,000 people in the five counties in eastern Ontario, which consist of Glengarry, Prescott, Russell, Stormont and Dundas.

I would like to thank all of the hard-working staff at the Eastern Ontario Health Unit, led by Dr. Paul Roumeliotis.

REPORTS BY COMMITTEES

STANDING COMMITTEE ON REGULATIONS AND PRIVATE BILLS

Mr. Paul Miller: I beg leave to present a report from the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills and move its adoption.

The Clerk-at-the-Table (Ms. Tonia Grannum): Your committee begs to report the following bills without amendment:

Bill Pr15, An Act to revive Allaura Investments Limited;

Bill Pr18, An Act to revive 1516495 Ontario Inc.;

Bill Pr25, An Act to revive Cen-Tower Investments Limited;

Bill Pr27, An Act to revive Brismair Property Management Inc.;

Bill Pr28, An Act to revive 1105481 Ontario Inc.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Shall the report be received and adopted? Agreed.

Report adopted.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I beg to inform the House that pursuant to standing order 98(c), a change has been made to the order of precedence on the ballot list for private members' public business such that Ms. Jaczek assumes ballot item 49 and Mr. Kular assumes ballot item 62.

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, I believe that we have unanimous consent that up to five minutes be allotted to each party to speak on Remembrance Day.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Mr. David Zimmer: It's my privilege to speak on behalf of the Liberal caucus in honour of Remembrance Day.

Today we remember in reverence a generation that is slipping away from us. We should remember their lives.

We should remember the context of their lives. Indeed, we have a duty to do so.

More often than not, without thought, we pass by the long list of names engraved on the cenotaphs in our local town squares and in the remembrance plaques hung in neighbourhood high school auditoriums. We casually scan the veterans' obituary notices in the newspapers and then move on to the next page. How often do we pause and ponder the distinguished service records of our parents' and grandparents' generation as we, today, live our hurried lives?

Veterans, men and women now well into their 80s, are passing away. Reading their obituary notices, you see their war record and their military decorations proudly commented on in the notice. Often in their obituary you see a photograph taken 60 or 70 years ago—a handsome snapshot, distinguished in their uniform, an expression of pride and determination on their face. I, like all of us here, marvel at their sense of pride in nation, at their confidence in the cause, at the sense of daring and adventure that permeates their stories.

Their lives were changed forever. They were times of fearsome danger and deep sadness; times of hope, happiness and exhilaration; and times of chance encounters in the randomness and chaos of war.

My own parents were one of the thousands of examples of lives lived in the tragedy, the triumph, the chance of war. But for the war, my parents, from completely different cultural backgrounds, would never have met. My father, an infantry soldier, and my mother, a worker in the local armaments factory, were thrown together by this randomness and chance of war—the randomness and chance of war, the great anxieties suffered, the risks run.

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My mother's beloved brother and her first cousin—they were all raised together very closely. One went into the army and one into the air force. Both died in the war. Their names are engraved on those cenotaphs and remembrance plaques in the hallways of high schools. My father married my mother during the war. He survived. After the war, like others of their generation, they raised a family and helped build the province and the country while never forgetting their losses. Today we are the beneficiaries of their courage. We here today have a solemn duty to remember their lives and the context of their times.

When my father died, many years ago, the local veterans' Legion draped his casket with our flag and quoted a traditional soldier's funeral oration from the Bible: "He has fought the good fight. He has finished the course. He has kept the faith." What better can be said to describe the lives of our veterans? This was their great contribution. This is their great legacy. We should—we must—in their memory, always strive to emulate their sense of right and wrong, their sense of conviction, their bravery and, yes, their modesty. This is our generation's greatest duty.

Mr. Ted Arnott: In January 1945, the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was assigned the task of attacking,

overtaking and "liquidating" the only remaining German outpost south of the Maas River in Holland at a place called Kapelsche Veer. Kapelsche Veer was a ferry harbour on a narrow island in the Maas River between the Dutch cities of Raamsdonksveer and s'Hertogenbosch in southern Holland.

It was expected that it would take the Canadians a few hours at most to accomplish this mission, given that they would have a week to train and that unlimited munitions would be made available to them. Instead, the first day of the assault at Kapelsche Veer, Friday, January 26, ended up being the regiment's costliest day in their 10 months of operation in northwestern Europe, and the planned few hours of fighting stretched into a five-day battle of brutal attrition.

It was winter, and unusually wet and cold. Each Canadian soldier was assigned a white snowsuit, but the British military planners knew that this wouldn't be enough to conceal their planned advance, for it was known that the entrenched German positions afforded the enemy an excellent view of the point of attack. Their solution would be to blanket the entire north bank of the river in smoke with 32,000 phosphorous smoke bombs.

Crossing the icy river to seal off the harbour from the north presented another challenge, so 15 four-man canoes were ordered in as well. Twenty four men were to carry flame-throwers. They were called Lifebuoy flame-throwers, because they were strapped to a soldier's back like a life preserver. It was thought that the flame-throwers would be perfect for attacking the German defensive position.

The armaments were assembled, the training completed and the final order was given: H-hour, time to go. From the very start, the Lincs, as the Lincoln and Welland Regiment was known, were in trouble. The ground was wet and extremely muddy, which made movement difficult. The German troops were well dug in and fortified with machine guns and mortars, their ammunition was plentiful and they'd been ordered to hold their positions at all costs. The smoke bombs were employed, and they worked. However, the smoke intended to conceal the Canadians' movement choked them instead, leaving them gasping for breath, immobilized. The flame-throwers, that in practice were so frightful in concept, were worse than useless, as Major Ed Brady later recalled:

"I had Lifebuoy flame-throwers. I think I had 10. Lost every man; every one of them was killed. You can imagine what it was like.

"I think they weighed 60 pounds. Trying to manoeuvre was almost impossible. And the minute they shot any flame ... they were an [easy] target and every one of them got it."

That same evening, Corporal Howard Loughlin was attempting to advance alongside his lieutenant, W.O. Fraser. Listen to his account of what happened:

"You couldn't see in front of you, and the phosphorous smoke got into your lungs. [The German] trenches were all covered in snow. You couldn't tell where the fire was coming from.

"And talk about cold... I saw Lieutenant Fraser fall and I crawled over to him. His parka was all blood down here and I started to undo the parka. I had a hold of him in my arms. And he said, 'They got me in the left arm too, Howard,' and then he died right then. I just laid him in the snow."

Morning turned into afternoon, night began to fall, and the brave Canadians fought on. Casualties mounted, and crude first aid was administered where the men had fallen. Major Brady, who I quoted earlier, did his best to help his wounded comrades.

"I had one bad situation that night," he recalled later. "One of the fellows had his arm blown off. And they'd given us these morphine syrettes, and of course it's pitch-black... and you couldn't see what you were doing.

"They'd got the blood stopped. We'd put a tourniquet on the upper part of his arm... what was left of it. He was in terrible pain. So I fumble around, and my fingers are so frozen. All you were supposed to do was jab him in the chest and break the syrette, squeeze it.

"Well, I can't say today if I ever jabbed him. I knew I jabbed him in the chest with something... What a helpless feeling when your fingers are so cold that you can't feel a thing.

"You can't see anything and a guy is suffering, and you're trying to do something for him. It's just the most helpless feeling in the world... But he lived... We got him out that night."

Four more days of intense fighting followed, in the mud, the cold, and the blood. On the morning of January 31, Captain Dunlop pushed his 45 remaining and exhausted men the final hundred metres towards the original objective.

There they found no enemy—not yet peace, but quiet at least, and at last. After five excruciating days, the battle for Kapelsche Veer was over. The Lincoln and Welland Regiment had sustained 183 casualties, of whom 50 were left behind, to rest for eternity.

My wife, Lisa, and I have been, for some years, associate members of Branch 226 of the Royal Canadian Legion in Arthur, my hometown. We are members because Lisa's late father, Edward McCabe, served in the Royal Canadian Navy, enlisting when he was just 17, in June 1944. Like so many, he volunteered and served while he was still a kid. God watched over him and brought him home safe when the war ended. He began his career as a school principal, got married and raised six kids. Our membership in the Legion honours him, his courage, his devotion to king and country, and his willingness to sacrifice his youth and perhaps even his life to stop the Nazis in their tracks and bring freedom to Europe.

I speak today, however, with a sense that no matter what I say, my words will not be an adequate tribute to our war dead, or their comrades whom God returned home. What gives me the authority to speak for them? As I grew up, my life was filled with all the benefits and privileges that my generation has come to regard as rights: a good education in high school, and then five years of university; time to mature and think and learn about the world, free from any real life-and-death dis-

tractions like a world war; time for hockey games, chasing girls, falling in love and getting married, pursuing a rewarding career, and raising a family myself—all because I grew up and came of age in a time of peace and prosperity, purchased for me and my generation by the millions of Canadians who served, and more than 100,000 Canadians killed, in World War I and World War II and in Korea and in peacekeeping, men and women forever denied the pleasures of youth and life that we are so privileged to enjoy.

And let us remember today, and on Remembrance Day, and every day, that they remain in harm's way: Our Canadian Forces who bravely build and, when necessary, fight to bring civilization and peace in Afghanistan, reminding us of Churchill's famous phrase, "Never in the field of human conflict was so much owed by so many to so few." Our acknowledgment and memory of their service and sacrifice is the same as we offer to those who came before them in the wars of the 20th century, the ones we have so long honoured and honour still today.

I close with a poem written last year by two 13-year-old boys in my riding, one of whom is with us in the gallery: my son, John Arnott. It proves the next generation will carry the torch of remembrance, as John McCrae exhorted us so eloquently to do. It's called *A Soldier's Journal*:

We fight for Canadians
The old and the young
We fight for the freedom
That soon will be won

The sacrifices we make
For our family and friends
Depict the bravery
As we fight and defend

We are the soldiers
Who fight in the field
Some of our wounds
Will never be healed

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The bodies we see
All covered in mud
We hold back our tears
As we walk through the blood

The letters we write
The pictures we send
To our loved ones at home
Who wish for the end

They stand here today
In this moment of silence
Proud of their loved ones
Who fought in this violence

From Vimy to Kandahar
Wherever the need
We stand tall as Canadians
Ready to lead

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: It's my privilege to make a few remarks on behalf of the New Democratic Party caucus here at Queen's Park on Remembrance Day.

Next week, many of us will take part in Remembrance Day ceremonies at our local war memorial, our Legion Hall or our cenotaph. Whether it rains or shines or snows, our veterans will be parading through our cities and through our towns to the local site of remembrance. Some will march; others will need to be assisted by former comrades or family members. And when they stand at attention while the Last Post is played, when the clock reaches the 11th minute of the 11th hour on the 11th day of the 11th month, their faces will be transformed as their thoughts travel back to days gone by.

I've seen that change take place in those faces, as I'm sure many of us around this room have, year after year. There's a sadness and a dignity at the core that is deeper than my very words can express, because in that moment you can see, in the faces of these men, young men in uniform who are far from home, in places that they had never even heard of or imagined but now are names of locations that are seared into both personal and national memory: Vimy Ridge, Passchendaele, Juno Beach, Ortona, Korea—young men and women who left their families behind, abandoned their textbooks or postponed their careers to go to fight and often to die.

We speak of sacrifice in the day-to-day debates that occur in this place, we extol the virtues of duty and responsibility, but confronted with the enormity of what was demanded of these soldiers and the harrowing price that they paid, the scale of their sacrifice is absolutely humbling.

Our words in remembrance of our fallen youth and those who returned home from the horrors of war are weak and empty if they are not accompanied by the will to ensure that their sacrifice had and retains meaning and purpose.

"In Flanders Fields" is perhaps the one poem that every Ontario schoolchild is guaranteed to hear and learn. In the last stanza of the famous poem, John McCrae calls on the reader not to break faith with us who die. The call not to break faith is more than a simple call to carry on the fight. The men and women who lived through these conflicts returned with a commitment, a commitment to build a better world for their children and their grandchildren, and they did not break faith in that commitment.

We owe them so very much. We can never repay that debt. We can never hope to accomplish what so many of them have accomplished, both in life and in death. But we can commit ourselves to remembering: remembering those who served in our past, remembering those who serve today, and honouring their memory.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to please rise as we observe two minutes of silence for those who have served, for those who continue to serve, and for those who paid the supreme sacrifice.

The House observed two minutes' silence.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

PETITIONS

TAXATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I definitely would like to acknowledge the efforts of the brothers and sisters from the Effort club—no pun intended—of Pakistani professionals in Mississauga. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a retail sales transaction in Ontario should not be subject to two separate taxes, at two different rates, under two sets of rules and payable to two different levels of government; and

"Whereas Ontario will implement a comprehensive package of income and business tax cuts in 2010, which will especially benefit working families and retired seniors; and

"Whereas the income taxes of Ontarians will be cut permanently, seniors will receive double their former property tax credit and other permanent savings will flow to Ontarians; and

"Whereas the cost to businesses to produce goods will go down permanently as embedded sales tax is permanently eliminated from the business cycle, enabling those businesses to lower business costs and pass savings along to their customers; and

"Whereas these measures represent the most comprehensive tax reform in a half century, enabling Ontario to be the most competitive place in North America to create jobs, move, grow and operate a business;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the government of Ontario and the members of the Ontario Legislative Assembly swiftly enact Ontario's comprehensive tax reform measures, including the move to a single sales tax in Ontario, as proposed in the province's 2009-10 budget."

A very eloquent statement—I'm pleased to sign and support it and to ask page Vladislav to carry it for me.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition here signed by hundreds of people.

"Whereas the McGuinty government is closing approximately 70 privately operated driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices in Ontario, it is requested that the Legislative Assembly take a further look at the impact this action will have on the affected communities and stop the closures from happening;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"It is in our best interest to request that the current private driver and vehicle licence-issuing offices of Ontario remain open. They operate in an incredibly efficient

and cost-effective manner that has been proven for almost 100 years, continuing to provide quality customer service excellence to Ontarians. To allow the transition of this service to the government centres is unconscionable and is unacceptable to the taxpayers of Ontario.”

I support this petition, affix my signature and send it to the table with Kira.

DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES

M^{me} France Gélinas: I have this petition with 200 names from the people of Sheshegwaning in the riding of Algoma-Manitoulin. It reads as follows:

“Whereas the Ontario government is making ... PET scanning a publicly insured health service ...; and

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“Whereas by October 2009, insured PET scans will be performed in Ottawa, London, Toronto, Hamilton and Thunder Bay; and

“Whereas the city of Greater Sudbury is a hub for health care in northeastern Ontario, with the Sudbury Regional Hospital, its regional cancer program and the Northern Ontario School of Medicine;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to make PET scans available through the Sudbury Regional Hospital, thereby serving and providing equitable access to the citizens of northeastern Ontario.”

I fully support this petition, will affix my name to it and send it to the table with page James.

GOVERNMENT SERVICES

Mr. Jean-Marc Lalonde: I have another petition that contains over 1,000 signatures, delivered to my office by Camette Piché of Embrun:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Government Services intends to close or move to another location in the township of Russell the Embrun licence bureau, presently located at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“Say no to the closure or move of the Embrun licence bureau and say yes to the establishment of an expanded office of ServiceOntario at 717 Notre Dame St. in the village of Embrun in the township of Russell.”

Thank you.

SALE OF DOMESTIC WINES AND BEERS

Mr. Robert Bailey: I have a petition signed by thousands of people in my riding. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario from the Ontario Korean Businessmen's Association:

“Whereas the province of Ontario restricts the sale of beer and wine to the LCBO, a few winery retail stores

and the Beer Store, and the three large beer companies are owned by multinationals;

“Whereas other provinces (notably Quebec) have been selling beer and wine in local convenience stores for many years without any harm to the well-being of the public;

“Whereas it is desirable to promote the sale of beer and wine in a convenient manner consistent with a contemporary society;

“Whereas it is essential to support local convenience stores for the survival of small businesses;

“Whereas it is obvious from the current market trends that the sales of wine and beer in convenience stores is not a question of ‘if’ but ‘when’;

“We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Liquor Control Act to permit the sale of beer and wine in local convenience stores to the public throughout the province and to do it now.”

Thank you.

CEMETERIES

Mr. Jim Brownell: I have a petition signed by a number of members of the North York Historical Society in Willowdale, and it reads as follows:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas Ontario's cemeteries are an important part of our cultural heritage, and Ontario's inactive cemeteries are constantly at risk of closure and removal; and

“Ontario's cemeteries are an irreplaceable part of the province's cultural heritage;

“We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

“The government must pass Bill 149, the Inactive Cemeteries Protection Act, 2009, to prohibit the relocation of inactive cemeteries in the province of Ontario.”

As I agree with this petition, I shall sign it and send it to the clerks' table.

TAXATION

Mr. John O'Toole: It's a pleasure to present a petition from my riding of Durham which reads as follows—I'm just picking out a good one here. This one looks pretty good:

“To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

“Whereas residents of Etobicoke do not want a provincial harmonized sales tax that will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to house sales over \$400,000; and

“Whereas the 13% blended sales tax will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and legal and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the blended sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families and low-income Ontarians;

"Therefore we, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario consumers."

I'm pleased to sign and support this and present it to Bethany, one of the pages on their last days here at Queen's Park.

RURAL EDUCATION FUNDING

Mr. Kim Craitor: I'm proud to introduce the following petition, and I want to thank Paolo Miele and his wife, Adriana Miele, for providing me with these petitions. It reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas the Ministry of Education funds rural schools in Ontario and that this allocation only be used for the rural school that has qualified for rural" school "funding and that a rural" school "allocation only be used for that school that is qualified; and

"Whereas a school board must only use this rural allocation for the rural school that is qualified.

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"Rural school funding should be used for rural schools only, not city schools."

I'm pleased to sign my signature in support of this.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Gerry Martiniuk: I have a petition signed by good citizens of Cambridge, which reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Cambridge Memorial Hospital and other hospitals in Waterloo region are experiencing substantial increased demands due to population growth; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's freeze on new long-term-care facilities has resulted in additional long-term-care patients in our hospitals; and

"Whereas the McGuinty government's cuts to hospital funding have resulted in a dangerous environment for patients and staff in Cambridge and across Ontario; and

"Whereas the approved new expansion of the hospital has been delayed by the McGuinty government and this has contributed to the funding shortfall;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"(1) That the McGuinty government meet its obligations to introduce a population-needs-based funding formula for hospitals as has been done in other Canadian provinces; and

"(2) That the McGuinty government proceed immediately with the approved new expansion of Cambridge Memorial Hospital."

As I agree with this petition, I will sign it and provide it to Bethany.

ONTARIO BUDGET

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a petition addressed to this Parliament and Legislature, and it has to do with the 2009-10 Ontario budget. It reads as follows:

"Whereas a global economic downturn calls for bold and decisive action by the government of Ontario to ensure that Ontario remains the most attractive and competitive place in North America to set up or relocate a business, raise a family or build a career; and

"Whereas the government of Ontario has introduced a budget that reduces taxes for individuals and businesses, takes immediate steps to aid small businesses and manufacturers and expands training, literacy and apprenticeship programs; and

"Whereas the province of Ontario, with its export-oriented economy and vibrant small business sector, needs to move past a sales tax system that sees a single sales transaction subject to two separate taxes levied by two levels of government under two separate sets of rules at two different rates and collected by two different bureaucracies;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the elected members of all parties support the comprehensive set of financial and tax reforms ... and in particular implement the proposed single sales tax to enable Ontario to emerge from the current economic downturn in a position to enhance its world-leading position and to attract, build and retain the people, careers and companies that will lead our province forward to a prosperous tomorrow."

Since I agree, I'm delighted to sign this petition and send it to you by page Jeremy.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. John Yakabuski: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save Ontario's independent school bus operators.

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal ... to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

"Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

"Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

"Whereas local school bus operators support other local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

"Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

"Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

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"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities."

I strongly support this petition. I sign it and I send it down with James.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have this petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. It comes from the Credit Valley AM Rotary Club. I especially want to thank Jim Kitchen, Jim Joseph and Dale Scheerer for having organized the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could be better performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Emma to carry it for me.

TRUE PATRIOT LOVE GALA

Mr. John O'Toole: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: In the spirit of tributes to Remembrance Day, I'd like to say that next Tuesday, November 10, there is an event being held, True Patriot Love. It is a \$1.5-million fundraiser which will be attended by Premier McGuinty

as well as Prime Minister Harper, General Rick Hillier and the Chief of Defence Staff, General Natynczyk.

I'd like to thank the organizers: Shaun Francis, Michael Burns and Erin O'Toole. I'd encourage everyone to support the event if given the opportunity.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

GOOD GOVERNMENT ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA SAINTE GESTION PUBLIQUE

Resuming the debate adjourned on November 3, 2009, on the amendment to the motion for second reading of Bill 212, An Act to promote good government by amending or repealing certain Acts and by enacting two new Acts / *Projet de loi 212, Loi visant à promouvoir une saine gestion publique en modifiant ou en abrogeant certaines lois et en édictant deux nouvelles lois.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member from Burlington had completed her speech. It is now time for questions and comments. Member for Niagara Falls.

Mr. Kim Craitor: Oh, sorry, Speaker.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Hon. Jim Watson: I'm pleased to stand today in the House for second reading of the proposed Good Government Act, Bill 212. This bill would in part, if passed, allow us to update the municipal election process, municipal legislation, our land use planning system and Ontario's building code, among other pieces of legislation.

Les Ontariennes et les Ontariens veulent un processus électoral municipal qui soit transparent, responsable et efficace. Ils veulent des administrations locales qui soient réactives, autonomes, responsables et redevables. Ils souhaitent un système de planification qui accorde la souplesse dont les municipalités ont besoin pour bien planifier tout aménagement futur.

Les Ontariennes et les Ontariens veulent un cadre de réglementation du secteur de la construction qui renforce la protection des consommateurs, soutienne la sécurité publique et simplifie le processus d'aménagement.

La loi est un pas en avant en matière de réalisation de ces objectifs.

During each local election, thousands of courageous Ontarians put their names forward. They want to make a difference in their community. I firmly believe that our municipal election process serves these candidates and the electors in their communities very well.

There is, of course, always room for improvement, which is why our government has introduced Bill 212. If passed, it would improve the Municipal Elections Act. Our proposed reforms have been made in consultation with the public, municipalities, and municipal and school associations. We also took into consideration the issues we've heard raised by those concerned with respect to accessibility of elections.

Following each municipal election, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has a practice of reviewing the Municipal Elections Act. After the 2006 election, ministry officials consulted targeted stakeholders. As part of the review, the ministry's website also sought comments from the general public. Through this bill, we are responding to many of the issues that were identified during the review. They came from the public, candidates and election administrators. We discovered that there was a need for the act to be amended to increase transparency and accountability and to close certain loopholes.

If this legislation passes, 52 weeks from last Monday, the fourth Monday in October, voters across Ontario will cast their ballots for their municipal leaders and school board trustees. This is one issue that was brought up during many conversations I had about the municipal elections process. As it was emphasized in this House last week, local elections would occur before Halloween. They would also be held before daylight saving time ends, and I've been told that candidates going door to door would appreciate that extra hour of daylight. The changed date also means that more of our citizens would be able to vote, including our seniors who may travel during the winter months.

Don Gardiner, from the Canadian Snowbird Association, had this to say: "We wholeheartedly support the proposal, as contained in Bill 212, to move the date of the next municipal election up from November 8, 2010, to October 25, 2010."

Moving the date forward would also help provide for the uncertainties of weather, particularly in northern Ontario.

This is not the only change we are proposing to the election campaign calendar. Nominations would also have to be filed by the second Friday in September each election year.

June 1 would be established as the deadline for a number of administrative activities. These would include passing bylaws that would authorize the use of voting equipment and vote-counting equipment or authorizing the use of alternative voting, such as mail-in ballots or Internet ballots.

The deadline for candidates to file financial statements on campaign expenses would be the last Friday in March after each election.

If the bill is passed, it would also promote a level playing field for all candidates. Currently, incumbents can enter races with what is commonly referred to as a war chest. A war chest is money that they've raised but didn't spend, which can be carried over from one election to the next. This can be compared to having two sprinters competing in a hundred-yard dash, with the veteran runner having a 25-yard advantage over the other even before the starter's pistol goes off. We're proposing that in future elections, candidates would not be allowed to keep their war chest. Bill 212 proposes that surplus campaign funds would go to the municipalities.

This change has widespread support from many communities. Municipal leaders such as Hazel McCallion

have said the following: "It certainly poses a disadvantage to new people wanting to offer themselves for public office because they have no money to start with so the incumbent has a major advantage."

We're not proposing to change the rules midstream. Those candidates with surplus campaign funds held in trust from the 2006 election would be able to use them for their 2010 campaigns. We felt this was only fair because those candidates did follow the rules that were in place and we didn't think it would be fair to be punitive and make this particular regulation retroactive.

We did a survey of various municipalities—in fact, 18 municipalities with surpluses—and found a total of \$807,058 held in trust by various candidates. In my hometown of Ottawa, for instance, we had campaign surpluses totalling \$171,855. In fact, I believe one candidate had \$40,000 in their war chest, which was more than they were allowed to spend if an election were held today.

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Currently, an individual, union or corporation can donate a maximum of \$750 to each candidate in every municipal and school board election in the province. We're keeping that rule the same because we think it's important to bring those kinds of restrictions as we have on ourselves at the provincial level. But they can spread this money now to an unlimited number of candidates. We're proposing a new contribution limit of \$5,000 per contributor in each jurisdiction to stop this practice. In other words, the aggregate amount will have to total a maximum of \$5,000. The limit of \$750 per candidate would remain. This is a similar practice that provincial party riding associations must also follow. There are limits to the maximum amount a company or individual can give to—I believe it's five riding associations in total.

In this legislation, we're addressing some issues related to campaign finances that have been brought to our attention over the last couple of years. The list of expenses that are not subject to spending limits would be revised. Expenses relating to a compliance audit would be excluded from the spending limit. Under the existing rules, the cost of fundraising functions isn't included in the candidate's spending limit. Our proposed amendments clarify that the cost of fundraising functions would not include costs where the soliciting of funds is incidental.

Just on that, one of the challenges we have is that the rules are so vague now that, unfortunately, people are finding loopholes in them. An individual can take out a full-page ad in a community newspaper extolling their virtues and then put a small tick mark at the bottom of the ad saying, "Please donate to my campaign," and attempt to list it as a fundraising expense when it's incidental to the main purpose of the notice—that is, to extol the virtue of the individual.

During our consultations, AMCTO, which is the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, made several recommendations, includ-

ing changes to how the voters' list is developed. Christine Norris, president of AMCTO, had this to say: "AMCTO was very pleased to see that several of the recommendations we have made ...to the Municipal Elections Act were included."

We're proposing to enhance the integrity of the voting process by clarifying voter identification rules for the voting place. If this legislation passes, the list of documents acceptable as identification would be set out in regulation. It is intended that this requirement for identification would be consistent with federal and provincial election practices.

Just to be very clear—because I'd heard one criticism that a number of senior citizens, and I have plenty of senior citizens in my riding of Ottawa West-Nepean, would be at a disadvantage because many of them do not have photo ID. I don't really agree with that. I think many of our senior citizens, in fact, do have drivers' licences or health cards or they have a passport, but if they do not, there is a stipulation that—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The members for Renfrew and Chatham.

Hon. Jim Watson: Thank you, Speaker. There is a stipulation that still would allow anyone, a senior citizen or another citizen of the community, to swear an oath to let the returning officer know that they are, in fact, the individual they say they are, and so that does solve that problem.

The vast majority of people do have photo ID of some sort or another, and we think it's very important to avoid the kind of potential abuse that an individual candidate or campaign can take part in. We've heard and seen stories where people go in and pick up all of the voter cards in a recycling bin in an apartment and hand them out to supporters, and no photo ID is required. We want to make sure that we close that potential loophole. Again, we're not putting anything in this piece of legislation that we're not requiring of ourselves at the provincial level.

As a step towards more accurate voting lists, which is another complaint we've heard from the municipal sector, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp. and municipalities could have access to additional information. This could include checking a box when you register for a library card or recreational program in your own community. In other words, when you go and sign up for a library card or put your kids in swimming lessons, the municipality, if this legislation is passed, would have the right to ask, with your permission, to forward your name to the city clerk so that your name could be put on the voters' list or your address could be updated on the voters' list. We would work with the privacy commissioner to ensure that these provisions are acceptable to her, but we believe this is yet another way to make the list more accurate.

We propose steps that would help assist candidates in determining their campaign budgets. When they file their nominations, candidates would receive an estimated spending limit; this would be based on the number of

voters in the previous election. When nominations close, candidates would receive a final spending limit based on the number of electors on the current voters' list. The higher amount would be a candidate's official spending limit, because often you get into a situation where you think your limit is X dollars, fewer people are on the voters' list, the number drops and you've budgeted your campaign based on the higher amount. So we're going to allow the higher amount to rule the day.

Bill 212 also proposes strengthened compliance and enforcement measures, and removes potential conflicts of interest. Changes to this component were advocated by, among others, Mayor Steve Parish, of Ajax, who said, "To have the decision made by council was problematic from a fairness point of view." Municipalities and school boards, for example, would be required to appoint audit committees. These independent committees would hear and decide on applications for compliance audits. It would be the outgoing council that would appoint the compliance audit committee, and it would not be made up of municipal politicians, or any politicians, for that matter.

Compliance audits would not be prerequisites for bringing a legal action with respect to alleged contraventions of election finance rules. Right now, the situation is very awkward for municipal councils. If an individual wants to bring forward an allegation, most of the time he has to bring it right to the council where the councillor who is being accused sits as a member. It puts that individual and the rest of the council in a very awkward situation.

We're proposing strengthening penalties for contravention of this legislation. There would be a fine of up to \$25,000 for individuals and \$50,000 for corporations and trade unions. The limitation period for commencing a prosecution for contraventions under the Municipal Elections Act would change, and prosecutions would have to be commenced during the term of office.

These reforms also address the needs of candidates and voters with disabilities. For example, all voting places would be required to be accessible to voters with disabilities. Until I became minister in this portfolio, I had no idea that that was not a requirement. It seems strange, in the 21st century, that we would not require all the voting stations for municipal elections to be accessible. This legislation will do that. Our proposed reforms require municipal clerks to have regard for the needs of candidates and voters with disabilities when planning elections.

Expenses related to a candidate's disability would be excluded from a candidate's spending limit. This, I think, is a very progressive part of the legislation. For example, an expense such as using a sign language interpreter for door-to-door campaigning should not be included as part of the election expenses; that could put you over the spending limit for your particular ward or community in one week. These kinds of things would be excluded.

We want accessibility measures to be transparent, and to help achieve this, municipal clerks would be required

to report to councils on accessibility measures within 90 days after an election.

Bill 212 has had a positive reception across Ontario. For example, Oshawa Mayor John Gray said in the *Durham Business Times* last week that he welcomes the proposal to move election day forward. The mayor pointed out that there is a likelihood of better weather for voting on the fourth Monday of October, and the possibility that “local snowbirds might still be at home.”

A Toronto Star editorial last week called Bill 212 important legislation. They welcome our government’s proposed reforms as “welcome changes.” The paper comments on municipal candidates “raising far more money than they can legally spend and banking the surplus for future campaigns.” The editorial says that our proposed legislation would “end the built-in advantage for incumbents who are able to amass huge and intimidating campaign war chests.”

We’re pleased that the Star recognizes our government’s proposal to create a more level playing field for all candidates. The newspaper calls on the Legislature to move quickly on Bill 212. Since municipal election campaigns and fundraising are due to start at the beginning of 2010—in fact, on January 4—the paper says, “The legislation ought to be passed by the end of this year.”

As everyone in this House is aware, Ontario’s laws and regulations have to be regularly updated to keep up with the times. Our government is proposing to update the Municipal Elections Act, the City of Toronto Act, the Municipal Act, the Planning Act and the Building Code Act, among others. These reforms respond to the needs of Toronto and all 444 municipalities across the province, whether they are big or small.

We would also enhance Ontario’s building regulation framework, and we’re proposing to update how we elect our municipal officials and school board trustees. The legislation, if passed, would better serve Ontarians who put their names forward on voting day and those who have lined up to have their voices heard.

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Let me leave you with this: I’m calling on the members of this House to support the bill so we can better our local municipal elections, further promote local democracy and engage people in issues that will ultimately impact their lives.

In conclusion, I’d like to thank a number of associations. We received some very good feedback from a number of community associations across the province. The Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers of Ontario, AMCTO, does a very good job because they are the men and women who actually run the elections on the ground in the communities. I also want to let the House know that, as a result of our memorandum of understanding through AMO, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, we have, in fact, consulted AMO. They also are looking forward to the changes that are coming forward. They’ve given us some very positive and constructive advice on how to proceed. I also want to thank various municipal leaders

themselves who have come forward to offer their insight and their points of view.

This is one part of Bill 212. I think it’s an important part of legislation. We believe that it’s something that is long overdue. We’re trying to close some of those loopholes and tighten up some of the regulations so that there is no room for individual candidates to skirt the rules when it comes to fundraising or when it comes to reporting finances and contributions. We also would require, for instance, that all donors be available electronically, online, to the public. That’s something that we do and that is very transparent and helpful through Elections Ontario. It can be very difficult to track down who gave to what candidate in the last election, and there is no requirement for that information, in an electronic age, to be available electronically. I think these are the kinds of things that make municipal elections more transparent and more fair, not just simply for incumbents or for newcomers, but obviously for anyone who is interested in seeking election at the municipal level.

I would urge members of the House, if they’d like a further briefing on any aspect of those pieces of the legislation that fall under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing—I commend my critic from the Conservative Party. I understand she was here in my office today being briefed on it, and I thank her for that. I’d offer that to any member of the Legislature to come forward. We can bring you some of the details of the Municipal Elections Act, Planning Act and the City of Toronto Act.

I thank the members for their time, and I look forward to their questions, comments and further debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I heard what the minister was saying. I can’t agree that this was done in quite the transparent way that’s been described because we, as members, didn’t have availability of the bill until more than 48 hours after it was leaked and released to the press and a statement made in the House. So we were not able to respond to the changes. I think that we have a little bit to go yet on being transparent and communicative.

Even though I can agree with parts of this bill, regarding accessibility, I think that that’s an exceptionally good part of the bill, and probably long overdue. I guess sometimes it’s these logical things we don’t think of right away, but I congratulate the minister and his staff for bringing those changes forward.

I do have a concern that something that is so accountable to the public is being hidden in an omnibus bill and not as a stand-alone bill, that this bill is going through the Attorney General’s office with many other parts to it—322 pages. As I say, something as public and accountable to the public as the Elections Act should be a stand-alone bill so that the public can see it, review it and not be mesmerized by the largesse of the bill and the magnitude of 322 technical changes.

I did get a briefing from the minister’s staff today, but unfortunately there was a very close eye kept on ques-

tioning, and there was a statement that some of the questions were not technical questions, and so it was very difficult to get answers.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The member for Timmins–James Bay.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Let's not kid ourselves what this is. This is an omnibus bill. All right? I remember being in opposition with the Liberals, and they used to go over the top—"to the moon," as they used to say—when it came to anybody utilizing the tactic of an omnibus bill. I have pulled out of Hansard all kinds of speeches about how dastardly, how terrible, how awful it was to have omnibus bills, and here's the government with their own omnibus bill.

I say to the government across the way: Listen, I'm sure we're going to find things in this bill that we can all agree on, but I'm sure there are also going to be some errors made in this omnibus bill, because that's been the experience of the past. Each and every time that a government, in my 20 years that I've been here, has brought an omnibus bill into the House—and I don't care if it was an NDP government, a Conservative government or a Liberal government—those omnibus bills were with errors.

I remember Bill 26, the omnibus bill that was brought in by the Conservatives. There were errors in it such that seven times we had to come back to the Legislature to fix some of the problems that were in Bill 26. Why? Not because the bureaucrats don't know how to do their job or they don't care, but you're being asked to amend a whole bunch of acts, and there really isn't a public process to allow the public who may be interested in sections of the act to give it good scrutiny.

We in the New Democratic Party have very simply said this: I proposed a reasoned amendment, and I would like to see what the minister has to say. We agree that there is one section of this bill that has to pass before January 1, and those are the changes to the Municipal Act. They don't go as far as I'd like. If it was me in government, I would do some other things in there, but I'm not the government; you are. So we'll allow you to have that by the January 1 deadline, and we will allow you to have passage of the Municipal Act, but allow the rest of the omnibus bill to go into committee in the intersession so that those people affected can look at it, can give it scrutiny, and we can make the amendments so that when this bill is passed, it does what the government says it's going to do.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: I want to congratulate the minister for his presentation today on the aspects of the bill here that pertain to his ministry.

There's just one question I have, and that is, who started the omnibus bills? Who started them? The NDP, quite a while ago, back in 1994. It was called the Statute Law Amendment Act: 756 amendments.

The PCs had a number of them; Bill 26, followed by the Red Tape Reduction Act, 1998, the Red Tape Reduction Act, 1999, and 2000 and 2001.

We introduced two good-government bills. We introduced one in 2006 and now this one. In this one, there are several different ministries that are involved. The ministers are getting up and speaking to the sections that pertain to their ministries. With respect to what Minister Watson spoke to today, I commend him for the changes he's made. He and his ministry have consulted with the Association of Municipalities of Ontario, the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers, the Municipal Property Assessment Corp., known as MPAC, Elections Ontario and the public. I wonder if the Conservatives and the NDP did that kind of consultation when they were in power.

To sit here today and say that we're the ones doing omnibus bills is hypocritical, extremely, because both parties—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I would like the member to withdraw that.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: Withdrawn—inappropriate, because it's been done in the past. It's a measure that has been done in the past. It's being done today in a way that is extremely transparent. Ministers are coming forward and presenting their sections. This is not the first day that we've debated this bill. The minister spent his time today—

Interjections.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Order.

Mr. Lorenzo Berardinetti: He clearly went through the sections that will pertain to his ministry. He did so effectively, and I congratulate him.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments?

Mr. John O'Toole: I think our next speaker, Mr. Yakabuski, will put it very clearly on the record that all omnibus bills—it's kind of a dangerous generalization—create bad legislation. This is a statement which I think will be referred to several times throughout this debate.

1620

This is an omnibus bill, the mother of all omnibus bills. In fact, if you look at it, there are 26 schedules in it. In fact, here's the issue. Quite honestly, for the newer members here, those elected since 2003, you actually can't read this bill without having the statutes you're amending beside you. They would stack that high. There are 22 ministries and 26 schedules. In fact, there are two brand new bills within this.

We might say that they're rather innocuous administrative changes. If that's the case, why aren't you being more forthcoming about it? What's the rush here? They introduced it last week. We're having debate almost closed up without even having briefings on it. Some of the ministries spoke for five or 10 minutes when their allocated time was an hour. What is it they're covering? Why are they doing this? It raises more suspicions than trust.

For the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, whom I have the greatest respect for—he will make a great mayor of Ottawa; I understand that, and maybe

some of these rules are probably going to affect you. But I look at it, and in my own section there are provisions to increase the pensions to the public sector. Are you aware of that? As a minister, you should be aware of it. It probably went through cabinet. What are you hiding?

There's another provision in here in section 11. I'm going to put this in the record in the few minutes I've been given. It's under the Perpetuities Act. It goes on: "The rules of law and statutory enactments relating to perpetuities do not apply and are deemed never to have applied to a trust fund required by subsection 9(1) of the Nuclear Fuel Waste Act...." What would that be doing in here?

The government has a responsibility to maintain in perpetuity these sites. What is it you're changing? Just be forthcoming—

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. The Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, you have up to two minutes to respond.

Hon. Jim Watson: I'd like to thank the members from Burlington, Timmins–James Bay, Scarborough Southwest and Durham for their comments. I'm going to stick to the issues that I raised that are an important part of our portfolio, and they are with respect to the Municipal Elections Act.

Let me just comment: One of the things that I think we all strive to do is to ensure that there's a greater voter turnout in municipal elections. It has traditionally been the lowest voter turnout of all three levels. One of the ways that we can do that is to try, for instance, to change the date to bring it a little sooner in the year so it avoids daylight savings time, it avoids Halloween and it avoids some of our constituents who may have the opportunity to go south in the winter. We want these individuals to vote in these municipal elections.

Secondly, there have been some comments raised today with respect to consultation. This is a government that takes consultation very seriously, and it's embodied in the AMO MOU process that was established several years ago between the government of Ontario and the Association of Municipalities of Ontario. We also have a stand-alone agreement with the city of Toronto, which is not a member of AMO. This is all about not surprising our municipal partners. It's treating them with respect. It's ensuring that they're brought into the decision-making process before a final decision is made, and the process has worked very well.

My former parliamentary assistant, Carol Mitchell, and my current parliamentary assistants Mario Sergio and Lou Rinaldi know very well that the process of AMO MOUs is tabled on a monthly basis. It works well because we're not interested in blindsiding our municipal partners but bringing them into the fold and seeking their advice. In many instances, as a result of their advice, legislation and regulations have changed for the better.

I'm very proud of the government's track record in dealing with municipal governments in a thoughtful fashion, and I look forward to working with them in the years ahead.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate? The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's my pleasure to join the debate this afternoon on Bill 212, which the Liberals call An Act to promote good government. I would say that it's an act to avoid scrutiny. It's an act to confuse the masses. It is an omnibus bill, as my good friend and colleague from Timmins–James Bay—although we've never actually been to each other's homes because they're so far apart, but I feel a kinship at times. I've got to tell you: He has it bang on when he talks about this omnibus piece of legislation.

I want to quote from the Hansard. Let me just put on my helpers here. "This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation."

Mr. Mario Sergio: Who said that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, who said that? What this gentleman was discussing was his opinion that any time any piece of legislation that was an omnibus bill was inherently and by default a bad piece of legislation. Do you know who said that?

Interjections: Who said that?

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, that was Dalton McGuinty.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Oh, no.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, yes. But he was in opposition at the time. And I want to thank the member from Durham—he does some tremendous research—for digging up that piece of information for me. I'm sure that undoubtedly people will be referring to that on repeated occasions during the course of this debate.

You know, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spoke for roughly 20 minutes, but all he covered was one part of the bill.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: A small part of the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: A very small part of the bill. We're talking about changing election dates in Ontario. That's a part of the bill, quite frankly, that I can support. But he could have brought in that bill and changed the election dates; he could have had a bill to amend the Municipal Elections Act and brought that in separately and singularly, on its own, and accomplished what they're doing in this bill. But as my colleague from Durham so ably pointed out—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I already did that one, sir.

—this nuclear waste management section of the bill, what's that all about? What are we trying to bury here—and that's no pun intended. But if you're going to bury it, you're going to have to bury it fairly deep because people are going to be wanting to know what's going on here.

I also want to talk about some other parts. The bill is An Act to promote good government. I'm going to ask my colleagues on the other side—and it's interesting that a couple of weeks ago the member for—is it Ajax–Pickering, Wayne Arthurs? Ajax–Pickering or Pickering–Ajax?

Mr. Joe Dickson: Scarborough East–Pickering.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Scarborough East–Pickering. Thank you, Joe. Is Ajax–Pickering your riding, Joe?

Mr. Joe Dickson: It still is.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It still is. I knew it was.

He brought in a private member's resolution: "I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should aggressively promote the use of Ontario wood products in residential and commercial construction throughout Ontario in order to support the more than 63,000 direct jobs and the 130,000 people who owe their livelihood to Ontario's forest industry." Now that's—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Oh, of course. Who wouldn't support that? But—

Interjection: That's not in the bill.

Mr. John Yakabuski: No, no, it's not about the bill; it's about what this government actually does to the forest industry in this province, and that's not part of good government. In fact, on Monday, under the cover of hunting season—

Interjection.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's part of the bill. Under the cover of hunting season, when all of the folks up in my riding have put away the chainsaws and they're out trying to get some meat for the freezer for the winter, in the form of white-tailed deer—which season opened on Monday—the minister releases this new joint proposal for lightening the ecological footprint of logging in Algonquin park. This is not about good government. It's a joint proposal by the Ontario Parks board of directors and Algonquin Forestry Authority board of directors. What it will essentially do is shut down the operations in my riding because, you see, the government is, without a single shred of scientific evidence ever produced to indicate that logging is detrimental to the health of forests or to the habitat of species, basically beginning what is the death knell of logging in Algonquin park. It's in the act here, back in here; if you look at the Endangered Species Act, and I'm getting to that. It's in here, and this is part of it.

If you think the lightening of the footprint is going to shut down the operations, the Endangered Species Act—and I know my friend from Timmins–James Bay was one of only five people who voted against Bill 184. I was one of them; my friend from Timmins–James Bay was another. At that time, the government indicated that they were going to use the Crown Forest Sustainability Act when they established the habitat protection zones. All of a sudden in 2008, they pulled that right off the table and said, "No, we're going to a permit procedure," which, if you understand how the permit system works, doesn't work. All you have to do is look at the spotted owl experience in Oregon and how it decimated that industry without protecting the spotted owl.

I am so concerned that this government is simply being run by the Aaron Freemans in the Premier's office with respect to how they see the world, without any consideration of the human effect of the things they're doing, that it leaves me no option at this time but to move adjournment of the debate.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke has moved

adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say "aye."

All those opposed, say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1631 to 1701.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Members, take your seats, please.

Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the debate. All those in favour, please stand until counted by the Clerk.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 14; the nays are 34.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Six and a half hours of debate having elapsed on this bill, pursuant to standing order 47(c) this debate shall be deemed adjourned unless the government House leader specifies otherwise. Deputy government House leader?

Hon. Brad Duguid: We'd like the debate to continue.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Further debate?

Mr. John Yakabuski: It would have been amazingly interesting if the government House leader had actually called for the adjournment, because they just voted against the motion for the adjournment. The timing is impeccable. I want to congratulate you for bringing that up right at this precise time.

During the intersession, of course, I had a chance to—I am quite amazed, actually, that the government went to such an effort to defeat this motion: a whipped vote. Because when I was speaking earlier—now, maybe the word got out—I thought we might actually be able to get this through because there were only a handful of government members in the House. Quite frankly, I thought at least four of them were actually sleeping. So I thought we might slip it by them. But the whip got to work and he's whipped them into shape. Look, we're glad to have you here.

Now, what I was getting at earlier when I moved to adjourn the debate was that we have to understand the reason and the premise. I know I talked about my absolute upset with the tabling of this proposal on behalf of the Minister of Natural Resources. That is a personal thing and it's deeply disturbing and of great concern to the people in my riding, but I know that also, as a caucus, we are just beside ourselves with the unwillingness of this government, the total disregard of what the people are calling for in this province, repeatedly, on a daily basis; you even read about it in the *Toronto Star*.

It was great to see Rob Benzie here this morning with his young boy on take-your-kid-to-work day. I know he's not in grade 9—if he is in grade 9, he's really a smart kid. I'm sure he is a smart kid, because I know Benzie is, but this kid was pretty young. If he's in grade 9, he certainly did better than I did when I was in school. But the total

disregard for what the people are calling for—I know the Speaker's actually wondering whether I got to grade 9, and that is not a record that I'm going to actually lay out on the table here, but I'll send you a copy of it.

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: The absolute disregard for what the people have been calling for—all across this province, from north to south and east to west, they've been calling for a public inquiry to get to the bottom of eHealth, and that is the real reason that we are so upset in our caucus at this time, because they've had ample opportunity to show some transparency and some accountability, and the Premier—excuse me; I just got a little bit of something in my teeth there. In the intersession, while the bell was ringing, we took the opportunity to go down to the reception of the Ontario elementary Catholic teachers' association, a wonderful reception. I hope that everybody has an opportunity either very soon or a little later in the day to get down there and join them. But during the break, while we were preparing our own strategy as a caucus, we did join the teachers down in the legislative dining room where they're holding a reception on our behalf, and we do appreciate that. I did have a little bit of beef stuck in one of my teeth there, Mr. Speaker, so I had to get that out of there, because I certainly wouldn't want it to be flying all over the place.

But now let's get back to the point. What I was talking about earlier was my concern with some of the decisions of the Ministry of Natural Resources, and if you look in this bill, Bill 212—it's a good thing that I have been working out lately, because I would have a hard time actually lifting this bill: 288 pages. You don't see many bills like this coming from this government. Most of the bills you see coming from this government could fit on the back of a napkin, and that's because they're printed in both languages. If they were just printed in one language, they could fit on half of the back of a napkin. Anyway, this bill is 288 pages. There are 26 sections, and 22 ministries that have some of their legislation amended. As my friend from Durham says, and I like the way he put that, it is the mother of all omnibus bills, and if he doesn't mind me quoting him, I take the liberty to do so.

Another concern that I have—and it has everybody in my riding upset and it's in this bill, so I'm not even out of line to be talking about it—are the amendments with the endangered species. I have in my hand a resolution that was passed by the township of Madawaska Valley, of which I am a resident. They are so concerned with what happened when Bill 184 passed this House, second and third reading—and again I see my friend from Timmins—James Bay, and I know he's upset about that as well. What really shakes the foundation of this building and shakes our confidence in government is when you have an undertaking on the part of the ministry that, “This is what you can count on. We are going to determine the protected habitat of endangered species using the Crown Forest Sustainability Act as the basis,” and then, at the 11th hour, that mat is pulled out from under you and you're left with nothing. It is a very serious concern.

1710

I've had some discussions with Jamie Lim and members of the Ontario Forest Industries Association, and they are equally as upset because of the devastating effects this is going to have on the forest industry.

The forest industry is going through the absolute worst period of its history. I speak to people who have been in this business for 60 years, and they say to me, “John, it has never been worse.”

There are some issues that are not necessarily within the government's control: You've got the credit markets, you've got the Canadian dollar issue, and you've got the US housing starts. Those all play a tremendously important role in the health of the Ontario forest industry. But what you can control is the legislation and the regulation that you foist upon the industry here in Ontario. You have complete control of that. At the worst crisis in their history, when they're down on their knees—they're down on their knees—this government decides to put more burden on them. That is wrong, and I have a responsibility, as a member who represents people who make their living in the forest industry, to stand and speak against what this government is doing.

I don't want to forget what the issue is today, notwithstanding the bill, and that is that we have fought tooth and nail since we came back here in the fall, asking for this government to stand in its place and admit to the people, and accept, that things went wrong and there are things that have to be determined. And the only way to determine that—because we know our committees can't do it; we know the trained seal committees, the neutered committees. I know the member for Scarborough Southwest was talking about neutering pets earlier. Well, the members on the government side have been neutered by the Premier's office when it comes to standing up for what is right. What is right is to allow Sarah Kramer and Alan Hudson to appear before the public accounts committee. That motion was made, and this government told its people, “No, we will not allow those people who could shed light on this issue before the committee.”

Interjections.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I hate to raise my voice, Mr. Speaker—you know that—but there are times when I feel compelled, just to try to hear myself over the din from the other side. If I had it my way, I would speak in a whisper most of the time. If they would allow me, I would be more calm and more quiet—and that's the way I really like it—but they don't allow it because they like to heckle.

As a result of their unwillingness to stand before the people of Ontario, in front of a public inquiry, and put the chips on the table and let the truth be known, I move adjournment of the House.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Mr. Yakabuski has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, say “aye.”

All those opposed, say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1713 to 1743.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): All those in favour, please stand and be counted by the Clerk. Thank you.

All those opposed, please stand and be counted by the Clerk. Thank you.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 13; the nays are 30.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate.

Mr. John Yakabuski: Alas, Mr. Speaker, we are running out of time on this debate today. However, if someone would entertain a unanimous consent motion to give me a little more time, I would certainly be willing to bring more information to the House on some of the vitally important aspects of this bill that we have significant problems with.

Earlier, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing spoke to the municipal portion of the bill, and substantively, I can support that portion. But for the most part, we have to remember one thing: the words of Dalton McGuinty when he was opposition leader in 1999. I will paraphrase it because I don't have the exact quote in front of me, but it's in Hansard from earlier. He said, essentially, any—qualify that, Mr. Speaker; remember that “any”; that doesn't mean most, that doesn't mean some—any omnibus piece of legislation is bad legislation.

Hon. James J. Bradley: That's not an exact quote. I know the exact quote.

Mr. John Yakabuski: It's not an exact quote, I say to the Minister of Transportation. I did say that I was paraphrasing, but the exact quote is in Hansard from earlier today. But I want you to remember that over there when you stand and support an omnibus bill brought out by your government. I ask you, have you no shame to do something that your Premier and your leader spoke against repeatedly when he was on this side of the House? I say shame. Let's split this thing up and we'll debate every part of it one at a time.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. Michael Prue: I cannot pretend that I heard the entire speech. I did hear the bells ring, though, and I came running up to see what all the fuss was about. I must commend the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke because he ended with such a rhetorical flourish, talking about the necessity of debating, one item at a time, everything that is contained within this omnibus bill.

I thank him for his support of our reasoned amendment, and if there is an opportunity, I might even get a minute or two to talk about it myself. But what he is doing is saying, quite frankly and quite correctly, that this bill is a huge bill, and this bill needs to be looked at within its component parts.

I firmly believe with all my heart that there is only one section of this bill that needs to be rushed through—and I

don't mean rushed through so that we're not paying attention, but to at least put on the fast track—and that is the stuff related to the municipal elections that are going to start on January 4 of next year. These rules must be put in place, whatever they are—and I hope they are changed—so that everyone who seeks municipal office in the election year 2010 knows the rules and knows what is expected of them as candidates, as campaign managers, or as CFOs. It is clear that that has to pass this House, has to be made law and has to be promulgated before that date.

I thank the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke for wanting to debate the other items. I think there will be plenty of time to debate the others. In the fullness of time, we can look and see whether there are any problems, problems which—I could not even understand some of them that were brought forward by the member from Durham around nuclear energy and the nuclear energy bill. I know that there are some problems with the Ontario Municipal Board—at least I see some problems with the legislation that's being brought forward—and I think, in the fullness of time, with proper committee work, we can do a good job. So I thank the member for his comments.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments?

Mr. Rick Johnson: We talk about why the government is doing this. The Good Government Act, 2009, would, if passed, modernize Ontario's laws and regulations to increase transparency, accountability and effectiveness. This bill is the combined response of many ministries. The result is close to 600 items from 22 ministries. The proposed items include a number of technical changes, general housekeeping measures; others increase transparency and accountability in our existing systems by improving public inquiries and the jury selection process. This is what the opposition has been calling for.

1750

There comes a time in every government's mandate when it needs to do housekeeping. Things come up that require tweaking, and some things require a bigger change. I commend the staff in the 22 ministries for their work in bringing forward the amendments that they have. They've seized the opportunity to modernize the respective acts that affect their ministries.

When I was on the school board, we found, going through our policies and processes, that there was still a policy in place that said if you rode your horse to school, the school board was obligated to water and feed it for the day while the horse was there. These are the types of things that you have to go through on occasion to modernize.

When the member from Renfrew–Pembroke–Nipissing—close enough—was speaking, it reminded me of a television show that I loved earlier, probably about 30 years ago, *The Muppet Show*. There were two characters that used to sit in the balcony, Waldorf and Astoria, the grumpy fellows who sat in the corner. They always had things to say, nothing really constructive, but

there was always a comment and it was always very entertaining. I have to commend the member for providing the entertainment that he has this afternoon. I appreciate the entertainment value, but there really wasn't much substance.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Questions and comments.

Mr. John O'Toole: I just want to comment on the member from Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke. He made a number of points, and before I conclude the remarks on what he missed at the end of his remarks, he spoke very passionately about the ecological footprint ongoing in Algonquin park as well as the Endangered Species Act and the implication on the forestry industry. In it, he made reference to the member from Pickering–Scarborough East and a private member's motion that he made in the House. If you look under schedule 21 of this bill, for instance, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, in section 9 of the act it “authorizes the use of equivalent materials, systems and building designs,” which might mean new types of wood products for beams and things like that. Well, that section is now repealed under the building code amendments. It's that kind of detail, and unless you read this, you're voting in the dark.

In fact, that's contrary to the innovation agenda. We need to have new materials, some of which may be forestry materials made here in Ontario, which is devastated—the economy of Ontario—and you're eliminating using replacement building materials. Now, as long as they meet safety and quality standards, they should be encouraged, not repealed. I think the member spoke because in his riding it accounts for a good part of the local economy. The member from Timmins–James Bay has often waxed eloquently on the same point. But the member also said that on December the 6, 1999, the now Premier, then opposition leader, said, “This omnibus, megabill approach to legislation makes for bad legislation.” He went on to castigate it even further. But the point he was making is: Members, don't vote for this bill. Let's break it up and deal with it individually.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Thank you. Questions and comments.

Mr. David Zimmer: I just want to speak briefly for a minute or two to two points, both involving the consultation process. The transparency with which this legislation was introduced stems from the consultation process that Minister Watson went through with AMO and various other municipalities. He knew that there were real concerns about municipal elections out there, and who best to find out what those concerns were and how to address those concerns but the municipal councillors and the municipal mayors, the heads of those 440 municipalities here in Ontario. The minister and his ministry got valuable advice, hands-on, practical advice about what sort of amendments should be included in the bill to make it a more meaningful, a more helpful and a more practical bill. Those suggestions, as a result of those consultations, are in the bill.

But it goes even further, because if this bill is passed—and it will be, I expect—that consultation process is going to continue after each municipal election. It's in the bill. The minister and officials from the ministry are going to sit down with those 444 municipalities and talk about what really worked well in the last election, how they can make improvements, how they can strengthen the process. It's an ongoing consultation process conducted after every election. That's consultation, that's transparency, that's taking the best possible advice from the people on the street, in the municipalities, who have hands-on experience in what's best in this municipal election process.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): The member for Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke, you have two minutes to respond.

Mr. John Yakabuski: I want to thank the members from Beaches–East York, Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock, Durham and Willowdale for their comments. I can't touch on every one of them, but I do want to speak to the member from Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock.

I want to remind him that he's not on the school board any more. He's the MPP. He went on to comment that we didn't have much substance in what we were saying today, and I want to remind him that one of the most important things we were talking about was the lightening of the ecological footprint in Algonquin park and the effect it's going to have on the forest industry. He's going to have to go home and explain to his constituents why he feels that's not important, because there are a number of people in his riding who make their living from the forest, and also the forests in Algonquin park. I want to remind the member that if he wants to say that those things aren't important, he might want to go home to his riding and say those things, because those constituents in his riding are not going to be very happy about that.

I know that people who make their living in forestry depend on that raw wood product in order for this industry to continue. There are so many people in my riding and all of the ridings that surround Algonquin park—the member for Algoma–Manitoulin, his people as well.

If we don't do what we can to support that industry, then that industry will disappear, and so will all of the jobs and so will all of the families who depend on those jobs.

What this government is doing is kowtowing to a constituency that has no interest in or any understanding of what it's like to make your living with your hands, felling trees. It has to be protected. This is the wrong way to go about it. Algonquin park has worked simultaneously with multiple uses before this place was built. It can continue.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Deputy Speaker (Mr. Bruce Crozier): Whenever I take my pocket watch out, you usually know what it means. This House is adjourned until 9 of the clock Thursday, November 5.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Lieutenant Governor / Lieutenant-gouverneur: Hon. / L'hon. David C. Onley, O.Ont.

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Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

Clerks-at-the-Table / Greffiers parlementaires: Todd Decker, Lisa Freedman, Tonia Grannum

Sergeant-at-Arms / Sergent d'armes: Dennis Clark

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Helena Jaczek, Sylvia Jones
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of Ontario**

First Session, 39th Parliament

**Assemblée législative
de l'Ontario**

Première session, 39^e législature

**Official Report
of Debates
(Hansard)**

**Journal
des débats
(Hansard)**



Thursday 5 November 2009

Jeudi 5 novembre 2009

Speaker
Honourable Steve Peters

Président
L'honorable Steve Peters

Clerk
Deborah Deller

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Deborah Deller

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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO

Thursday 5 November 2009

ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

Jeudi 5 novembre 2009

The House met at 0900.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Good morning. Please remain standing for the Lord's Prayer, followed by the Jewish prayer.

Prayers.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

TECHNICAL STANDARDS AND SAFETY STATUTE LAW AMENDMENT ACT, 2009

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 21, 2009, on the motion for second read of Bill 187, An Act to amend the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2000 and the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996 / *Projet de loi 187, Loi modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes techniques et la sécurité et la Loi de 1996 sur l'application de certaines lois traitant de sécurité et de services aux consommateurs.*

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: Mr. Speaker, I'm a little bit surprised nobody else got up. Good morning, everyone. I hope you are all having a good morning.

I just want to put a couple things on the record in regard to the technical safety amendment act. I first of all would say that this whole concept of moving the responsibility for—oh, thank you. That's why I have friends in this Legislature. They make sure that I look good. They can dress me up, but they can't take me out; that's the problem.

Anyway, as I was saying, part of the problem in this province is that this whole issue of taking responsibility for the inspection of construction sites etc. used to be something that was conducted by the province. When it came to the people who went out to make sure that the people who service elevators were doing their job according to the rules, and the people who do the actual maintenance on boilers in everything from apartment buildings to industrial plants or mines or mills were doing what they should be doing, that used to be within the ministry itself.

One of the reasons the crown is normally the one to do that is that the crown answers to the public. If you are a civil servant and work as a Ministry of Labour inspector or an inspector within what used to be the old inspection branch of the ministry that took care of this, if there is some question of public safety, there's always somebody who is accountable, because in the end they work for the

crown and ultimately there's a minister and a government that's responsible.

Some years ago, the Harris government decided they would privatize the delivery of those services in a sort of private setting. So what they did was shut down what used to be the inspections branch within the ministry that was responsible for these types of inspections and put it into a sort of private sector model by creating the TSSA. I've got to say that right from the beginning it was not one that I welcomed. I've had experiences of having to deal on issues that are under the authority of the TSSA, on behalf of constituents in my riding, and I've got to say that it is not exactly the most user-friendly agency to deal with.

For example—and I think a whole bunch of other people would have got the same thing—on the issue of electrical contractors, the TSSA decided that you had to have a master electrician's licence in order to be a contractor in the province of Ontario. I understand the logic of what they were trying to do: They wanted to eliminate from the marketplace those people who do what they call fly-by-night or moonlighting work out of their basement, the electrician like myself, who work at the mine and say, "I can make a few extra bucks by wiring a house."

I guess there's an argument for that, because the contractors are the ones who pay the taxes and have overhead, and you need to protect their area in some way. I understand the need to want to do that. But the problem was that once they started to set up the master electrician's licence, they didn't want to grandfather any of the people who were in the business before. So I had contractors—we in this Legislature all had contractors—who had been in the business for 20, 30 years, and they were made to challenge the test.

Now, they could challenge the test, and all the ones I know who wrote it and who were opposed to the test, passed it. But the point was that they were not given any credit for all the work they had done up to then.

Imagine you're an electrical contractor—you're Eric's Electric or any of those contractors who were involved in this particular process—and after 20 years of being in business, paying your taxes and building a reputation in the community as a legitimate contractor and somebody who does quality work, you're told all of a sudden by the TSSA, because they have authority under the crown, that you have to go out and get a master's licence and you have to challenge the exam.

Well, these guys were really upset. They were saying, "Listen, I've been in the business for 20, 30 years, I served an electrical apprenticeship, I worked in the fol-

lowing fields before I started up my own business, I've had my own business for 15, 20 years," whatever it might be, "and I'm having to do this thing over again." They asked, "Why is there not grandfathering of the contractors who have been out there for a certain period of time?" So there would be some sort of criteria established that you have to be a contractor in good standing for five years, having done it full-time, or whatever regulations you want to tie around it.

My point is this: It was virtually impossible to get the changes to apply grandfathering to these people as a result of the way the TSSA was set up. They were extremely frustrating to deal with, I must say. Yes, they always returned my phone calls—I'm not going to say for a second that they didn't—and the people I dealt with were certainly trying to be accommodating to me. But the end result was that they were not trying to accommodate in any way the request that the contractors made.

We ended up having meeting after meeting and conference calls. I remember that at least once or twice we had meetings of contractors who came to my office and people from the TSSA came down. The arguments were made, and it was a bit embarrassing because the case was made but at the end of the day they decided they were going to do what they were going to do. Therefore, the contractors in my community, like everywhere else, were forced to write the exam. Now, they all passed the exam, and we said that from the beginning. It's not a question of these people not being competent; they had been doing it for 20 years. Of course they could pass the exam; they could pass it with their eyes closed. But it was a question of respect. Do you respect the work these people have been doing for 10, 15, 20 years, and if so, why not find some way to accommodate that?

We've recently had the same situation on the Mining Act with prospectors. Prospectors are expected to take a course in order to be knowledgeable about the rules and regulations under the Mining Act and what their responsibilities are vis-à-vis the act. Again, we did say, "Well, there have been people in the business for a lot of years, they understand this, they're professionals, that's what they do, so let's grandfather people over a certain amount of time." The government ended up saying no. I just say that it's been an extremely frustrating process to try to get amendments for these types of situations.

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Now, as for the TSSA and what's in this bill, what really is a bit shocking is that the reason we have this bill—I would imagine—is because of the propane explosion that we had a year ago. That's why we're here. One of the things that is really sort of interesting, as you read through the bill, is that the bill makes sure that the crown isn't liable for any of the omissions made by lack of inspection or faulty inspections on the part of the TSSA. I think that's rather regrettable, because what we're basically saying is that we want to make sure that the government, at the end of the day, and the crown generally—because the government could be any of the political parties eventually after the next election—the

issue is that the TSSA will find itself in a position with this particular legislation that its officers, directors and employees are not agents of the crown, and the crown is not liable for any act or omission by persons who are not agents of the crown.

What we're going to be doing is lessening the liability of individuals acting on behalf of the TSSA and also lessening the liabilities that the crown has when it comes to lawsuits arising from situations such as we've seen with the gas explosion that we had here in Toronto last year.

There's another thing that's of concern, and originally, when I heard it the first time, I thought, "Well, it can't be. Why would the TSSA say that?" But if somebody calls, let's say, an employee, and says, "We think you need to come and take a look at this boiler"—or "this elevator," whatever it is—"because we think there's some shoddy maintenance going on," or whatever, one of the first things that the TSSA asks is, "Who's going to pay for the investigation?" Wow.

I can tell you that if I call the Ministry of Labour as a worker and say, "There's an occupational health and safety concern at the mine"—or the forestry plant or the car plant, or whatever it might be—I can guarantee you that the Ministry of Labour doesn't say, "Who's going to pay for the investigation?" They just go out and they do the investigation.

One of the concerns of the TSSA, because they are in a private sector model, is the cost of doing the inspections. So they're much more reluctant to do inspections, on the basis that it might cost them money. Something that they might think, "Well, you know, this is not too important, this is just some person grumbling about something, and they're mad about their employer, so let's not send out an inspector," puts the public at risk, because one of the things that I think we need to follow is the idea that if there is a complaint, it should be followed up on.

I'll give you a story. When I worked at McIntyre mine some years ago, there was a complaint made by a worker in regard to a particular problem having to do with air-lines underground. I think it was on the 3,700-foot level. Anyway, the long and the short of the story is that the Ministry of Labour sent an inspector in, and because at that time I was the health and safety committee person within the Steelworkers Local 4440 on the maintenance side, as an electrician, I was asked to accompany the inspector.

Well, the inspector came out and inspected the situation and looked at what needed to be done—and in fact, there was an infraction that needed to be fixed—but decided, as a result of something he heard two guys talking about—I believe it was the 3,700-foot level where the 12-shaft hoist was; yes, the deck was at 3,800, so the hoist was up on 3,700. Anyway, as a result of that, the inspector decided to go and check both the deck and to take a look at the cage itself, because a couple of people had mentioned something about the pin that goes across the top of the cage that's tied to the cable, that's tied to

the hoist—that the bushings that were holding this large pin that secures it so the cage stays tied to the steel wire cable were worn out.

To me, it sounded preposterous because I know that that thing was inspected every week and that the people who inspected it knew what they were doing. So the inspector decided to shut it down and take a look at it, and lo-and-behold, what did he find? He found out that there were no more bushings; in fact, the bushings had been worn out. What had happened is that over the years, because of the way this thing had been constructed, the maintenance people didn't actually have physical access to see that particular part of the bushing. It looked normal when you looked at it, but there was a real potential that one day if the shaft conveyance was going down the shaft, down to 6,800 or back up again, what could have happened was that that whole bar, that pin that runs across the cage that the rope is tied to, could have shoved over to one side and just unhooked and let the cage fall down to the bottom.

What was worse was—on a cage you have something called “dogs.” Dogs are simply a mechanism. You have shaft guides that come down, which are BC fir, and then you have a guide that comes on the cage, like an H-beam type of construction, that guides the cage down so that it follows these wooden shaft guides. And if the spring that holds the steel-wire rope to the cage loosens, it engages a spring that throws sort of like knives—these are called dogs—into the wood to stop the cage. Because of the way that these bushings had been worn out, that system didn't work at all. So we were potentially in a situation of losing one or more people as a result of a shaft conveyance accident. This would have been back in the 1980s or late 1970s sometime.

My point is, the Ministry of Labour inspector followed up and was not concerned about who was going to pay, how long it was going to take or whether this was inconvenient to the employer or the employees. His sole concern was, “I'm inspecting something, and I want to find out if it's safe, yes or no.” When he found out it was unsafe, that part of the mine was shut down for I think a period of three or four days, until they were able to reconstruct that whole assembly system to make it safe for workers.

I can tell you, that was a really serious accident waiting to happen. Thanks to the Ministry of Labour inspector who happened to be there—I think Mr. Connelly was the inspector at the time and prevented what could have been a tragedy at that mine.

My point is that for the TSSA to ask somebody, “Who's going to pay for the investigation?” and to sort of pick and choose what you're going to go out and investigate, eliminates the possibility of inspecting something that might be quite dangerous but that people haven't twigged to, for whatever reason.

I think it's like the police. If there's a crime being committed, you dispatch the police and the police go and check. If they get there and find out it's a minor thing, they just tell people to calm down and they leave. But

they go there and they find out, because it might be a serious situation. It should be the same thing with the TSSA. I'm not saying they should be the police and come in and kick the door down, but to come and inspect the situation to find out if there is something that's dangerous that should be dealt with.

I would be much more comfortable having those services that are provided by the TSSA moved back to the crown, because at the end of the day, you know that if you have an inspector who works for the crown, they're not going to be concerned about, you know, “Should I or shouldn't I go and inspect this?” because it's a question of cost or whatever. They go out and make sure that people are safe. I think there is no cost, when it comes to safety, that is too high. If it's unsafe, it's unsafe. Don't use it. We're talking about people's lives.

I worked in an industry in which it was very normal for people to get killed at the mine where I worked. We were a group of five or six mines. It was very normal—when I first started working in the mining industry—to hear once, twice or three times a year of somebody dying in some tragic accident because of some unsafe condition, and sometimes it was because workers were cutting corners and the equipment was not set up properly, and other times, it was because they were instructed poorly on how to do their duties.

I always remember Mr. Hale, who was one of the most tragic ones. His son died. Mr. Hale was a mine captain. His son was working at the Pamour mine. He wasn't properly trained, and he stood on top of an ore bin in which, as we say, the muck was frozen. The rocks that come up from underground are called muck, and when the muck came into the bin on the surface, it sort of congealed and locked itself up by pressure. That's what we call “frozen.” For whatever reason, poor young Mr. Hale—and I have to believe it was because of improper instruction—tried to unjam it using a blowpipe—that's a great big steel pipe about 20 feet long—and blowing air into certain areas and cavities to get it to start flowing freely. Unfortunately, he was standing on top of the muck pile when it did unjam. It was a pretty tragic way to go. Poor Mr. Hale and Mrs. Hale lost their son, the brother of Kim and Paul. I have to say it was one of the most tragic things I've seen. We would see that on a regular basis.

But my point is this: You look at the mining industry today and you don't see the amount of tragedy as far as accidents that we used to see back in the 1970s and, I would argue, into the 1980s. Why? Because governments of the day passed the Occupational Health and Safety Act and said to workers, “You have the right to refuse unsafe work.” They hired Ministry of Labour inspectors—not TSSA types but people who worked for the government—to go in to make sure that employers had health and safety training going on within their employ.

For example, if I wanted to go back and work underground now, after having worked for years underground, I couldn't work underground legally because I have to have common core. There's a whole bunch of training that I have to do before I can go underground and work

as an electrician, including understanding what's going on in my environment around me as far as what happens with the drilling, the blasting, the mucking and all of the various stages of mining.

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The result of all of that is that companies have become much more safety-conscious, because they understand this is just good business: If I don't have accidents, I don't have an increased workers' compensation assessment and I can make sure that those employees that I invest in and train are going to be with me for a longer period of time and they're going to be more productive. That has been the example and the result of what happened when we decided to do occupational health and safety in a real way, not only in the mining sector but across the various sectors of our economy—for my particular case, the mining sector. It's not to say that we don't have tragedies in mining today. But I can tell you, for the number of hours worked today, in 2009, there are far, far fewer accidents and far, far fewer tragedies as far as deaths in the mining industry than there were 25 or 30 years ago, and the reason for that is that we understood that the crown has a responsibility to make sure to inspect those things that are called in and are said to be unsafe, that workers are trained and employers are sensitized to the need to train workers and doing the things that make our workplaces safe.

One of the things that is sad about the TSSA is that they have the ability to do what are called variances to orders. They're able to take, for example, certain equipment that may not be safe on a particular worksite—like some piece of equipment that has been used for a long time, and if you use it properly it's safe, but it has some issues around the way it was constructed. They have the ability to say, "Okay, you can go ahead and use that equipment." Unfortunately, we've had a number of tragedies on construction sites as a result of the TSSA having the ability to issue those variances.

One of the ones I'm concerned about is what they're doing with boilers. You know, in mines and sawmills and paper plants, various types of industrial settings, you have to have steam. The steam is created by way of boilers. One of the things they've done under the TSSA is to give companies the ability to say, "Your boiler will be scaled down from being class"—I forget what the classes are; class A to class B, or B to A, whatever. The point is to lessen the standard by which you have to have qualified personnel to run it in regard to what goes on and in regard to the maintenance on it. I think that's a bit of an accident waiting to happen, because I can tell you as an electrician who worked on boilers, they're a pretty dangerous thing if you don't know what you're doing. If you go into a boiler and start working on a control circuit and happen to not know what you're doing and do improper maintenance on it, or improper repairs, you could end up bypassing or shutting down some limit switch on the pressure or temperature or whatever it might be, and have a ticking time bomb sitting in the middle of the plant ready to blow because somebody didn't know what they were doing.

We've had a very good system of making sure those people who touch boilers are qualified. I wasn't allowed to touch a boiler until I became a journeyman electrician. It took five years before they allowed us to get near those things to really learn about them, because they're quite dangerous pieces of equipment if you don't know what you're doing. The TSSA is allowing employers to downgrade the classification of those boilers so that lesser-qualified people can run them, and I think that's an accident waiting to happen.

With that, those would be my comments on this particular bill.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Eric Hoskins: Thank you for the opportunity to participate in the debate today on Bill 187 and in particular to respond to some of the comments made by the member for Timmins—James Bay. I want to also appreciate the experience he brings to the issue of public safety that he has outlined this morning.

I believe it's important to recognize that Ontario's public safety system is among the best in the world. It works well to protect Ontarians every day, and there's nothing more important to this government than the safety of all Ontarians. It's also important to continue to find ways to improve the system. Bill 187 would improve accountability and it would improve transparency of the Technical Standards and Safety Authority. Overall, it would further strengthen Ontario's public safety system.

Someone said that the TSSA should be brought back into government. I disagree. Safety is the McGuinty government's first priority, and having industry and safety experts ensuring a strong public safety regime is in the public's best interest.

Bill 187 provides clear powers for the minister to guide the strategic focus and activities of the TSSA. This guidance comes through policy directives and an annual mandate letter to the board of the TSSA. This would increase the transparency and visibility of the minister's oversight role.

Importantly, Bill 187 also creates a chief safety and risk officer. This is an independent officer, a safety advocate who would report directly to the board. Some here have also made the claim that the chief risk and safety officer will not report publicly. That also is not true. The officer will provide systemic oversight, and his or her reports to the board will be made public.

Bill 187—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. Sorry, that was questions and comments.

Are there any further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: I think the member from Timmins—James Bay outlined the complexity that all these various trades and professional bodies deal with in terms of providing for our safety. It's something we don't see. We assume that someone is watching over all these boilers and propane operations, and I think it was a rude awakening that the system we had to sort of supervise the safety aspects had some big holes in it. Like the member from

Timmins—James Bay, I had grave misgivings about this type of self-regulation; I totally agree with him about that. In this bill, we're at least trying to tighten up some of the most gaping loopholes in that self-regulation and trying to make it more responsible.

I know that the bill before us was brought to us because of an incredible, tragic explosion that occurred. I live a couple of kilometres from where the explosion took place, and I can still remember all the windows in my own house rattling and shaking that morning. I thought it was a storm. I came downstairs, went outside, looked in the sky and said, "It must be a thunderstorm or something." I turned on the TV—nothing; I turned on the radio—nothing. I went back to bed—another rattling.

I remember that I got on the phone later that morning with Rick Bartolucci, the Minister of Community Safety, and said, "Listen, something horrendous has happened. You had better make sure your guys are there on the job."

I just want to mention that this bill is also a good memory of the district chief of emergency planning, Bob Leek, who went to the site on his day off and died—we can't forget that—and of Parminder Singh Saini, who was a student at Sheridan College studying manufacturing and management, who also died. Let's not forget those two great people.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I want to commend the member from Timmins—James Bay for his presentation on this bill. I appreciate his comments and his knowledge about apprenticeship and about the training that the people who are responsible for the operations of the TSSA have. But as I was looking at the bill and recognizing why this bill was introduced—it was the big disaster, the big event that took place in Toronto with the Sunrise Propane explosion. But when I look at the bill, it really doesn't do much to solve any of those problems. I'd be the first to admit that in my experiences with the present act, there are a lot of things that need to be changed to make it work better, and yet none of that seems to be in here.

This just seems to be a bill that was brought forward because the minister said, "I'm going to do something," and then he spent his time on something else and didn't get back to it, and all of a sudden somebody said, "How come you haven't done anything?" And so he did; he wrote this bill.

It talks primarily about how he's going to structure the board differently and give the minister more powers to tell them what to do, but so far, he hasn't decided on anything or hasn't been able to figure out what he's going to tell them to do differently than they've done before.

I think it's rather a shame that we're spending so much time debating a bill that could have been so much better but does so little for us.

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The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Dave Levac: The member from Timmins—James Bay offers us some sound advice and practical experience that he has had and that has been translated into some of the concerns. I noted very clearly that he was talking about the safety, and I respect that immensely. He knows that I have deep respect for his past life, shall we say, and experiences in his community.

What an interesting comment one of the opposition members made, to try to say this is fluff. Quite frankly, it's disappointing to hear that, and I'm rather interested to see how they plan to vote: whether or not they don't want improvements to be made to the bill. What's rather interesting is that it was their bill that created the TSSA in the first place. One of them trumpeted this fantastic thing when 50% of the people who were supposed to investigate amusement rides were not even qualified or certified to investigate the rides. In my riding, unfortunately, some tragic events took place. So I really dismiss this attitude of always finding a reason to say no. In opposition, it's not always to oppose; it's to propose, and I haven't heard that from one of the members over there.

This member, on the other hand, has made some interesting challenges for us to consider, and I think that's the way in which debate brings out the best in a bill; instead of just sitting there saying, "Government bad, opposition good." So I want to thank the member for his sound arguments and his sound observations through his personal experience. The more we use this place to enhance the bills that we put forward, the better it is. I still maintain that this is a fluid place, this is a place where we continually move in a positive direction that offers us opportunities to do things differently and to move us into the next century etc. So the days that the people hear nothing but negativism—they're done. We want to move forward, and I thank the member for his sound arguments and his proposals to this House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member from Timmins—James Bay, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I thank Mr. Levac from Brant for his comments. I try, as much as possible, when getting into debate or getting into committee, to make some proposals. The real test is—I think all of us will agree, because we've all been in government and we understand, unfortunately, how government sometimes doesn't work. I think one of the real tragedies around this place is that the committee system has been really weakened over the years. I take the comments that you made at face value, that debate is about positioning what the amendments should be when we get into committee, so that we're able to take a bill and improve it. Once you get into committee, you have an opportunity to have the public come and make comment, and members are able to further discuss it and hopefully come out of the committee process with a bill that achieves the objectives the government wants, but in a better way.

The unfortunate part is—and I'm not going to put all the blame on this government, because it has been a problem for a while—that members are less and less able

to do the work they are sent here to do when it comes to amending bills. Why? Because the cabinet, and specifically the Premier, decides that if we show any type of movement on a bill, it's somehow a question of weakness for the government. I say quite the opposite: The style of leadership that I like is somebody who says, "Oh, you've got a better idea? Let's move forward." I just hearken back to the Second World War and Operation Overlord with Dwight D. Eisenhower. If people go back and read what Dwight did, it wasn't his brainchild. He wasn't a megalomaniac who wanted to have control of everything that happened and have control every facet of the operation. He went out and found the best people he could. He put together a team, they planned, they did the best that they could, and then they left it to the soldiers and their leaders to implement that plan. As a result of his leadership and allowing people to rise to the occasion, we were able to successfully invade Normandy on June 6, 1944. My point is, we should be doing the same here.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I'm pleased to rise to speak to Bill 187, the Technical Standards and Safety Statute Law Amendment Act.

I just wanted to mention the government's comments on the presentation made by the member from Timmins—James Bay. It's helpful when you have a debate about something that you not only point out the things that are not quite right—which, of course, in this place is the opposition's job. We're not called the "government's cheerleaders"; we're called the Queen's loyal opposition, to make sure, when government introduces legislation, that what we propose or what we see as failing or short in the legislation is brought forward so the people of Ontario will know what it's going to do.

I always—I shouldn't say always, but invariably, when the government introduces a piece of legislation, the first thing I look at is not the legislation; I look at what they call the compendium. It usually points out what the minister is proposing to do with that piece of legislation. Then you go through the bill and see whether it actually meets that.

In this case—and that's why I brought it up in my short remarks—that isn't what is happening. The bill that is before us—I don't like to use the word "fluff"; I don't think anything we do in this place is fluff. But it has very little impact or will make very little difference in the things that took place during the Sunrise explosion or after the Sunrise explosion. It was mentioned that there were some shortcomings in the training of the people who were involved, and it has been mentioned, as I read the news reports of it, that there were instances where the inspections had not taken place. But there was nothing ever mentioned in those that in the present legislation the inspections were not supposed to take place or that the authority to do those inspections was not in place. It was all there; it just wasn't being done.

I would hope that this legislation would have come forward with something that would have done that, to

say, okay, self-regulation works, but there has to be some teeth in it when the organization doesn't do it, and obviously that's what happened here.

It seems that after the explosion there were quite a number—in fact, the government came out, first of all, to say that all propane facilities must be inspected as quickly as possible. They went through them all, and there were quite a number of them that were actually shut down because they had shortcomings that had to be corrected before they could continue operation. That wasn't because the legislation wasn't strong enough to do that; it's just that the organization was not thorough enough in keeping up the inspection process.

As I said, I was hoping that this legislation would come up with some direction on dealing with that, as to mandating what they must do, as opposed to allowing the minister, by regulation, to do things that, at this point, as we stand here and debate this bill, we don't know what that might be, and it would appear, because of the way the bill is written, that the minister doesn't know that either.

As I read the first three or four pages of the notes and the bill, it is primarily the reorganization of the TSSA as it's presently structured. I would just point out that the act is amended by adding section 3.1, which "changes the status of the authority from a designated administrative authority under the Safety and Consumer Statutes Administration Act, 1996 to a statutory corporation under the Technical Standards and Safety Act, 2002." I'm not sure that that is going to—in fact, I am sure that it is not going to have a great impact on the safety of the industry or the work of that organization. I don't think in the aftermath of the Sunrise explosion that there was anything there that said, you know, if you could just change the status of the organization from one type of status under the arm's-length from the government to another status, somehow things would have worked out differently. It goes on doing that same thing; it talks about making changes for the sake of making changes, as opposed to improving the operation of it.

I don't want to spend a lot of time on the Sunrise explosion, because that's not where I have had the most involvement with TSSA. In rural Ontario, the TSSA also looks after all the heating systems in private homes. They set the rules, and I think that's the challenge we face. I was hoping we would see some changes in here.

The company or the supplier of the fuel in our home heating systems in the majority of rural Ontario homes gets a notice, and you must have your heating system inspected before they can put any more oil in your tank. Again, this is the standard set-up, so they will make sure that they're all inspected. I have no problem with that, but when they come in and make the inspection, the rules that were set in place and the requirements under that inspection—they say my furnace, which was put in 10 years ago—it was put in under code; it was put in by a professional installer—is now so many inches too close to the ceiling because of the heat convection, so I must put in a new furnace. It has to be a lower furnace because

the association has collectively set a standard for what that clearance must be.

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This is from personal experience. When they inspected my furnace, it wasn't the height from the ceiling, but it turns out that when I put the furnace in the house—I put in a new furnace and a new chimney, so it was all built to code and properly operational. When they came in to inspect it, I was told that it was all fine but I needed to put up a new chimney. One would think a chimney would be a place to get rid of the excess combustible material, that as long as it was contained, solid, no leaks, high enough so the draft would get it at the top and wide open so there was no creosote on the inside to plug the chimney, that would be sufficient. So I said to him, "Why did you suggest I need a new chimney?" He said, "You have an eight-inch flue and that is too large a chimney and too large a flue for the size of your furnace." I thought that was rather strange.

As luck, or lack of luck, would have it, I was not at the deadline where it had to be corrected, so he said—this was a number of years ago—"Before 2007 you must have had that corrected so we can keep supplying the oil."

We had occasion a year or so later to have someone else come in; we were changing the supplier of the fuel and they had to send in an inspector to make sure that the furnace was appropriate. When they came in to check the furnace, I said, "I was told by a previous inspector that the chimney is too large." He said, "I don't know how he would have known that." I said, "He told me that it was eight inches and it should be only six for the size of the furnace." He said, "The standard is that you have to take a reading." There is a piece of equipment; they put a hole in the pipe right by the furnace and they measure that and if the draft on the chimney—in my case, it had to be between one and three; if the draft in the chimney is between that, you have a sufficient chimney. He put it in there and it was a two. You couldn't get much better than that; immediately it was passed.

When the public asks the inspector, "Who sets that regulation?" they are told that it's the province of Ontario. I said, "I spend a little time with the province of Ontario in the Legislature and I hadn't been part of the debate that said that definition should be six inches or eight inches or whether it should be two, three or four." When we checked it with the TSSA, in fact, the TSSA collectively set it as an organization and then they get the government to approve it.

Again, I think having the same people who supply the product, who do the changes and also set the standard of the changes that are needed, is something that needs to be looked at. I would have hoped that would have been in this bill, but obviously that's not the case.

I just wanted to go back to the corporation and the things they're supposed to do under this. It may all be good, and I think it was used yesterday when it came to the good government debate. One of the speakers from the government side said that there comes a time with all legislation that you need to review it to make sure it's

kept up to date and you change the names that have been changed at ministries—I think the member from Haliburton-Kawartha Lakes-Brock mentioned something about the Education Act still including that if you drove your horse to school, the school board was obligated to feed and look after the horse for the day while you were there. Things like that need to be changed. But I don't think you do those types of changes and call that dealing with the problem that was pointed out when they originally started on the act, when they said that we had to do something because of the circumstances that surrounded the fire.

Here we have the direction of what the board is going to be able to do, the board that we changed the name of. It talks all about how they're going to inform and educate, but it doesn't really tell us the relationship between the minister and that board and whether in fact there's going to be any more oversight on behalf of the ministry to make the inspections and the remedial action to be taken any better than they were before. I wonder whether we are in fact improving the situation.

I see here there's a lot of—again, they talk about the safety, but there doesn't seem to be anything at this point in here that isn't that way already, except giving the minister the ability to make more appointments.

I would really like to say that if there's nothing wrong with the bill, then obviously one should support it because things aren't going to get any worse. Then why are we having this debate? We might just go on with another topic. The challenge we face—and we get back to the original comment by the member from Brant about the issue of the opposition never coming up with good suggestions and just telling what's wrong, and because the government introduced it, it's always bad, and because I'm in opposition, it's always good. That may be true, but that's not the intent. If the government would come forward with legislation that was good, I'd be happy to stand here and commend them on it.

But that's not the case with this legislation, because we are going to leave this debate and, as was mentioned, we're going to committee with the bill. The member from Timmins-James Bay is going to put forward his good suggestions on how the bill can be changed to make it a better bill. The government is not going to listen to a single one of those changes. They're going to come back and say, "See, we did it. Now we've solved this problem that the original compendium was supposed to solve," and the bill will do nothing of the kind.

If we had not been talking about the things that were short in this debate, the public would have never known. They would assume that the protection that was missing when the Sunrise explosion took place has now been remedied by this new piece of legislation. That is not the case, because this doesn't do anything with the problems that occurred there. That's why I think it's so important that we stand here and try to get the government to change their ways and listen to some of those recommendations.

The members have a smile across the aisle because they're suggesting that that's not the case. I would ask

them to tell me how many opposition members in the last two years have been accepted at committee to change a bill meaningfully? None.

Mr. Mike Colle: A heck of a lot more than you did in eight years.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I notice that I touched a nerve. I'm not suggesting that they are not telling the truth, but any person who would stand on the other side—I wouldn't do it to the government, to say that they have never accepted one—any member on the government side who would say that any government that has had eight years in office and never accepted a single amendment is a liar.

I think it's so important to—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to withdraw.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I withdraw that. I was just saying that any member who would think that no amendments had been made on the other party's behalf in all the time they were in office must have missed a lot of the committee meetings, because that in fact happens and it does happen all the time. My question was just: How often has it happened in the last two years? I'm sure that they can provide me with that information.

0950

I don't have a lot to say about the positives of the bill because, like I said, it is a bill giving authority to the minister to make changes in the TSSA, and at this point in time, we have absolutely no idea what those changes are, or even what it is the minister is proposing to correct with the changes he's going to make by what this bill allows. I don't see the benefit of being here to have this debate, but I also don't see the benefit of passing this bill and leaving the assumption with people that we are solving the problems that presently exist with the TSSA, how it functions and what needs to be changed.

With that, I just don't see how the government proposes to correct the problems that they suggested were there. As the member across the aisle said when the Sunrise explosion took place, he immediately called the minister, saying, "We'd better get our people down there because there's a big problem." When they went down there, they found that there were things that needed to be corrected—and this bill was supposed to correct them, but I don't believe it does so.

With that, I will end my remarks and suggest that I would hope that they would take the advice of the very well-thought-out presentation by the member from Timmins—James Bay on what needs to be changed and that they would look at making those amendments to make this a bill that's worth voting for, and that, when it comes back—if those changes were made—we would look favourably on it. But at the present time, this bill is not going to serve the people of the province of Ontario well. I think that it needs a lot more work before it gets passed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I just want to repeat what I was trying to say earlier and speak on the comments that Mr.

Hardeman made. I think the comment is fair: The purpose of the Legislature is for the government to be able to bring bills forward and to do the public business. The job of the assembly is to make sure that those bills make sense and that they're drafted in some way that achieves the public policy objective that they want in some sort of reasonable fashion.

The unfortunate part of what happens around here is that over the years—since I've been here, for 20 years, and it started before that—more and more, the process of committee has become weakened. We have not allowed members the freedom they need—as government members, backbench government members or opposition members—to really play the role that they should be playing on committee.

What I've seen far too often is that you go to a committee and you all of a sudden read a section of the act and you go, "Well, the government wants to get to A but this particular section doesn't get them there." So you make a recommendation to change the language in order to make sure that it works the way it should, and the legislative counsel agrees that your interpretation of the act is such, the lawyers for the ministry agree that you are right in your interpretation, and the government won't change it.

I think that is a very, very sad state of affairs, when you don't have a process by which members are able to exercise their duties here in a responsible manner at the committee level.

I was just trying to make the point that if we were to do more of that, I think you would end up with stronger legislation and the government, quite frankly, could say: "Look, we're a government that's introduced 60 bills in the past little while. We've accepted so many amendments from the opposition, and they've actually voted in favour of some legislation." Working together is not a weakness; I think it's a strength that a government could show. Unfortunately, I don't think this government is doing that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Questions and comments?

Mr. Jim Brownell: I'm pleased to have a couple of minutes to speak on this, this morning and to make comments with regard to the member from Oxford. He spent some time on the propane safety and the situation at Sunrise.

Certainly I appreciate the work and the effort from my good colleague from Eglinton—Lawrence on the morning, his action and the alerts he gave to people. But with regard to the after-effects of Sunrise, there was a propane safety review that made 40 recommendations to our government. We have enacted 33 of those 40 to date. If you don't understand and realize what's been done, I would suggest that you talk to your seatmate, the good member from York—Simcoe. She was at estimates yesterday when the minister went through every one of those recommendations and told us that they have been carried out—33 of them.

He also indicated that they were in the process of discussing three other recommendations with other minis-

tries or authorities that have responsibility. Two are in this legislation. Recommendation 31 is, "Propane operators should be required to carry insurance as a condition of licensing," and recommendation 32 is, "When there is an imminent hazard to safety, and the facility operator will not or cannot act to correct it, TSSA inspectors should have the full and clear authority to ensure that the installation is made safe and to charge back the cost to the operator." Those are two that are part of this bill.

So have we done the work that was required after this explosion? Yes, we have; 33 of 40 recommendations, two here, and I believe that would make five more that we're working on. Three are before other ministries and two still have work required.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mrs. Joyce Savoline: I'm pleased to stand up and speak for a few moments on this bill. It's a bill that we've been waiting a long time for. The explosion happened 15 months ago, and now we're dealing with the issue here in the House and debating it.

It isn't as fulsome a bill as I think would be appropriate in dealing with an issue like this. Yes, some things were done and, yes, some recommendations were made and some recommendations have been enacted. But in essence, all this bill really does is delay a plan. The government has no plan, not for this and not for anything else. All it has done has been to give the minister more powers to think about how to move forward and do things later, so why is this something that Ontarians should have a lot of confidence and trust in?

The minister is now empowered to appoint less than a majority of the corporation directors, to appoint the chair and the vice-chair of the corporation's board. That means the minister now has a strong tie to that board. But why? If he trusts the board to do their work, why did he have to do that? Ontarians need more than just more ministerial involvement in their everyday lives. They need to know that this government has a pulse on what's going on.

The TSSA is responsible for the safety and inspection of fuels, pressure vessels, boilers, upholstered and stuffed articles, elevating and amusement devices. What does the minister know about any of these things? Why would the minister be involved in appointing people to a board he knows nothing about? It's a delay tactic.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further questions and comments?

Mr. Mike Colle: Just in the comments from my colleague from Oxford, I was disappointed in him resorting to schoolyard name-calling when it comes to debating a bill.

The point here is that, because the government in the Harris days willy-nilly privatized the inspection of these services without looking at the comprehensive reporting mechanisms and without looking at the consequences—

Interjections.

Mr. Mike Colle: They just said it was good to privatize safety inspection. They don't want to hear the consequences of their mismanagement in the past. But it

happens to people innocently sitting in their homes, to the two innocent victims who died, and this is one instance. That's why government has to undertake stronger measures to oversee safety regulation in this province. That's why the minister undertook a propane safety review made to him by a panel of experts. Thirty-three recommendations were put forward to the minister; they have been implemented.

Then this bill followed. That's the lesson to be learned here: that when you farm out things like safety, meat inspectors, water inspectors, you just don't assume it's going to take care of itself by some kind of dream that you have about the private sector. The reality is that people's lives are at stake, whether it be with boilers, the safety of elevators—it's serious stuff. That's why you need government oversight. This bill gives us greater government oversight to ensure that the job being done by the TSSA is one that is under review and scrutiny. I know the members opposite don't agree with that, but that's what we need in this province to protect our public, who depend on government to ensure that there are good water inspectors—

1000

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. The honourable member for Oxford has up to two minutes for his response.

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I just want to point out, for the comments from the member from Eglinton—Lawrence—he suggests that when the TSSA was formed and given the authority to be self-regulating, that that's the problem. My whole presentation was based on, if that's the problem, why is the government not fixing that problem now? It just doesn't make sense to talk about how we know what's wrong—but we've got this bill and it doesn't fix the problem. It doesn't change what the member just said was the problem.

I want to point out that in section 3.11, it lists the new corporation's authority. It's so much changed; now it's going to make some things so much better.

"(1) The corporation shall appoint a chief safety and risk officer with the consent of the minister.

"(2) The chief safety and risk officer shall independently review the corporation's activities or proposed activities related to the public safety responsibilities assigned to the corporation under this act and the regulations.

"(3) The chief safety and risk officer may prepare"—may prepare—"a report on any matter related to the corporation's activities ... if the officer considers it in the public interest to do so.

"(4) The chief safety and risk officer shall prepare an annual report and such other reports as may be requested by the board of directors or the minister."

These are all the things that they're supposed to do.

"(5) Reports prepared by the chief safety and risk officer shall be made available at the corporation's annual meeting and shall be made available to the public."

This bill is really about how the organization has been set up—that the members from the government are suggesting was set up in totally the wrong fashion—and all it

does is make a new way of reporting and giving the minister the authority to make regulations after the fact. When things go wrong, he can make a regulation to try to correct that.

If they wanted to change it, they should have changed it to a way that would have fixed the problem they suggested was there.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Howard Hampton: I just want to say a few words about this bill. I note, in listening to the comments, that there's a fair bit of reference here to history, so I feel compelled to say something about that history.

I remember when the former Conservative government brought in the legislation which had the effect of privatizing things like elevator inspection and, as we all now know, historically, the privatization of things like the inspection of propane operations.

I remember, for example, the now Minister of Transportation, Mr. Bradley, saying that this kind of privatization was terrible, wouldn't work, was going to put public health and public safety at risk. I remember a number of other people who are now cabinet ministers in the McGuinty Liberal government saying, "This is terrible. This will not work. This is going to lead to problems in public safety and public health."

Well, we had the awful and unfortunate example in North York. A large propane yard was not being handled properly, inspections were not being done, and there were terrible risks to public health and safety. And then, indeed, there was a terrible explosion and lives were lost—and millions of dollars of property damage. We were so fortunate that the explosion happened when it did, on a Sunday, because if it had happened, say, on a Monday morning when people were on their way to work, when people were working in some of the other operations in the area, we could have seen many more people killed. That's all part of the historical record.

I urge people to reflect on this bill that's being brought forward by the McGuinty Liberals, who said that the privatization of things like elevator inspection, propane yards and all kinds of other activities was going to put public health and safety at risk. What does this bill change? Are you going to see public inspection? No. Are you going to see, even sometimes, public inspection? No. Is it going to do anything to really change what the Harris Conservatives put in place? No, it's not. You're going to continue to have the TSSA, which is fundamentally a privatized operation. It has all kinds of people who are in the business, whether it's the business of selling propane or the business of doing elevators, who are going to sit on the board of directors. Inspection is going to continue to be made by people who are not necessarily—we can't be sure if they're well trained. So the whole inspection process—nothing's going to change here.

What was originally condemned by many of the Liberal members of this Legislature is going to continue. The only thing that's going to happen is there's going to be a public relations veneer put over top of it. And that's

what it is: a public relations veneer to give the impression that something is being done, to give the impression that public health and safety is going to be protected better, to give the impression that this issue of protecting the public and protecting people and protecting their health and safety is in the hands of a disinterested body that has as its primary function protecting the health and safety of the public.

That's what this bill is about. It's about giving the impression that something is being done. But once you pry beneath the oh-so-superficial veneer, nothing's changing. Nothing's really changing structurally. The same people are going to do the inspections. The same people are essentially going to be in charge of the TSSA. So we have here what is essentially a public relations gesture. That's what it is.

If I can put it in current context, let me compare it to the financial fiasco that happened in the United States just recently, because what happened, over a number of years, and much of it happened under the Bush government, there was essentially a deregulation and a sort of privatization of financial regulations in that country. People could take a bundle of mortgages that probably never should have been granted in the first place—a bundle of mortgages; there was nothing standing behind those mortgages—and say, "These are very secure financial instruments, and the public would be prudent to buy them." People bought them and then found out there was only a very superficial veneer protecting the public; underneath it was a bag of snakes. And that's what we have here.

I fully admit the Conservatives, when they passed the legislation to privatize the inspection of things like elevators and propane dumps—what was created was a bag of snakes, and it was only a matter of time before public health and safety was put at risk. But have the McGuinty Liberals done away with the bag of snakes here? Not at all. The bag of snakes still exists. The only thing that we have on top of the bag of snakes is this superficial veneer that's meant to say to the people of Ontario, "Oh, everything's okay. Everything's going to be all right. Everything's going to be fine," when, fundamentally, it is the same bag of snakes that existed before.

I'm sure we'll get some annual reports. Whether these annual reports have any integrity to them and whether they have any substance to them, I think we'll have to wait and see. But I have no more confidence that this superficial veneer is going to do anything more to protect the public and the public's health and safety than existed before, because underneath it, it's the same old bag of snakes.

I expect we'll see another press release from the government announcing that it has taken great steps to protect the public and it has taken great steps to protect public health and safety. And we'll probably see another press release and another press release. But underneath it all, it is the same old bag of snakes—just a superficial public relations exercise to make the public feel good while the public continues to be at risk in terms of its health and safety.

New Democrats don't see a lot of substance here. We don't see a lot of integrity here. We see another public relations exercise by a government that's very good at them. I will give this government credit: They are very, very good at public relations exercises—very good at them—but underneath, it's still the same old bag of snakes, and that continues to be a serious problem for the public of Ontario; it continues to be a serious problem in terms of protecting the public of Ontario. Public health and safety, in my view, is one of the most basic services that people should expect from government: The government will protect basic public health and safety and the government will not contract out basic health and safety.

If I can just give another example of where this was contracted out and where it has gone wrong, let's look at driver licensing and driver testing in Ontario today. That was contracted out. The operation that is now running it—if you care to look outside; look in Ontario but also look outside of Ontario—has a terrible record. If you look at the other jurisdictions where they operate, they have a terrible record. If you go and talk to the people who are doing the driver testing, they will tell you that full-time people who were dedicated to the job, who were very knowledgeable about it have been replaced by part-time people, who really, in many cases, do not have any dedication to the job—it's just another job to them, another part-time job to add on to the two other part-time jobs they have—and public health and safety is at risk.

So we see real problems with this legislation. We see real problems with it, and no matter how many press releases the McGuinty Liberals put out and no matter how many announcements and reannouncements they put out that they're going to better protect public safety, underneath it all, it is still the same old bag of snakes and public health and safety continue to be at risk.

We need to do better in Ontario. We need to do much better. But I suspect it will only be a matter of time before this public relations exercise is exposed and we have another incident. It may not be a propane facility; it may be an elevator, it may be some other device that falls under the control of the TSSA, where inspections are not being done properly, where the interests of the operators are taken to have more importance than the interests of protecting public health and safety, and we'll have another incident. When that happens, I think this bag of snakes with the superficial veneer that we're seeing today will be exposed again.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 10:15 of the clock, this House stands in recess until 10:30, at which time we will have question period.

The House recessed from 1013 to 1030.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: I would like to welcome the winners of the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Great Grants Awards. Joining us today to watch question per-

iod are representatives from le Salon du livre du Grand Sudbury, Actua, Foodlink Waterloo, Fools for Health and the Youth Serving Agencies' Network. Welcome to Queen's Park.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Today is the last day for Kira Foreman-Tran, our page from Oakville, and joining us in the member's gallery are Kim Tran and Bruce Foreman, the proud parents of Kira. Please extend a warm Queen's Park welcome to them.

Mr. Ted Arnott: I'm glad to welcome a group from Waterloo Lutheran Seminary. The seminary is Canada's oldest and largest Lutheran theological seminary and is a federated college of Wilfrid Laurier University located in Waterloo. They are here today to participate in the Inter-faith Social Assistance Reform Coalition day here at Queen's Park.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: I would like to welcome a couple of women: Ruth Rideout, who is here today from Beaverton, and Valerie Andrews of Origins Canada, from Richmond Hill. Welcome to the Legislature.

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: We'd certainly like to welcome today a delegation representing various cities from the People's Republic of China. They come from three various cities and represent the Ministry of Construction of the People's Republic of China. Leading the delegation is the president, Mr. Tuan, Hongjun; Mr. Wang, Tongjie; Mr. Ma, Weidong; Ms. Zhang, Yuling; Mr. Zhang, Reimin; Ms. Xu, Huiling; Mr. Liu, Chuanping; Mr. Zeng, Changtai; and Ms. Ren, Huijuan. Let's welcome them warmly to the Legislature.

Mr. Jim Brownell: Although I don't see them in the galleries at the moment, I would like to welcome teacher Shaun MacDonald, a former student of mine, who is now teaching at Parkhill Academy in Mossley, Ontario, and chaperone Dave Carpani and the 11 students who are here with them today learning about government in action. Welcome.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome, visiting Queen's Park from the riding of Elgin—Middlesex—London, Mike Pepe and his students from Regina Mundi secondary school, who will be joining us in the galleries today. Welcome to Queen's Park.

VISIT OF PRINCE OF WALES AND DUCHESS OF CORNWALL

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I think it's important that we put on the record that, on behalf of the Ontario Legislature, we take this opportunity to welcome His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales and Her Royal Highness the Duchess of Cornwall, to formally welcome them to the province of Ontario. We thank the government of Ontario for their warm welcome to Their Highnesses last night.

LEGISLATIVE PAGES

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I also would like all members to join me in taking an opportunity to thank

this group of pages. This is their last day in the Legislature and we want to thank you all very much for the great things that you've done to assist us. And who knows, some of you may very well be back sitting in these very seats where we are. So, on behalf of the Legislature, thank you to the pages.

Applause.

ORAL QUESTIONS

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Attorney General. Minister, do you really think it's a good idea to rewrite the Public Inquiries Act at the same time as the public is calling for an inquiry into your billion-dollar eHealth boondoggle?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: From time to time over the years the government of the day wishes to call a public inquiry, wishes to obtain information from an independent source with a review of facts and circumstances in order to guide either legislative initiatives or policy initiatives. That advice needs to be advice that will be directed to the issue involved and can be received in a timely way and the most effective way. Our Public Inquiries Act has not been updated in many years and what we're proposing are a series of additional tools to provide the public inquiry process, to help get the right information, at the right time, for the right questions, in the right way.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: The timing here is interesting. The Auditor General reported the eHealth scandal on October 7. On October 13, the Leader of the Opposition called upon the Premier to appoint a public inquiry into the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. Since then, the Premier has done all he can to stonewall every question we've had about who got rich, what connections they had to the McGuinty government and the involvement of former staff and ministers. Then, on October 27, they introduced a new Public Inquiries Act.

Attorney General, do you really expect taxpayers to believe that the timing of this was just a coincidence?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: So a review of the proposed legislation shows, and will show, that the traditional, unlimited-in-any-way inquiry can still take place. What the proposals enable, for example, is a commissioner who is fully independent to be able to narrow the issue, focus the issue, obtain evidence that everybody agrees upon in an acceptable way; enables there to be some assistance in framing the issue and the question; also, all of it directed for the purpose of ensuring that the answer the public wishes to obtain can be received as quickly, effectively and cost-effectively as the public will need it to be received.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Mrs. Christine Elliott: It's the same old pattern where the McGuinty Liberals will do everything they can

to avoid answering the hard questions. We saw it first with our questions about the economy: first, when they released public accounts late on a Friday, and then when they rushed out the H1N1 announcement a day before the economic update. We saw it when they dumped boxes of documents, Cancer Care Ontario records, on the same day the auditor reported on the eHealth scandal. Now we're seeing it again with a new Public Inquiries Act that comes two weeks after there was a call for an inquiry into the eHealth scandal.

Minister, did the Premier put you up to this?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: I say very gently to the opposition that there were some weeks when they were calling for an inquiry on a different issue almost every day. The Public Inquiries Act remains as strong as it ever was, but would propose to be strengthened: additional tools to enable that the inquiry be focused so if you actually need an answer, within a few months you could obtain an answer; if you were actually concerned about the cost of multi-year inquiries, you could help focus the inquiry and contain the cost; if there were a number of facts and circumstances on which there were no evidentiary dispute, the commissioner could benefit. We need the right answer at the right time for the right questions.

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is for the Attorney General. As chief law officer of the crown, you're supposed to rise above politics. Aren't you concerned about compromising your office by getting wrapped up in the Premier's scheme to gut the Public Inquiries Act so the Premier won't have to answer questions about the billion-dollar eHealth scandal?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: We take a different position than the one being proposed by the honourable member. In fact, a fair and complete reading of what's in the proposed public inquiries legislation does not reduce it but enhances it; does not diminish it but expands its opportunities and scope. A fair reading will see that not only can you call a traditional, non-time-limited, very expansive, come-back-in-five-years inquiry, but you can also now, while maintaining the independence, call an inquiry that will be more focused, with more scope, more timely and more cost-effective, of greater benefit to the people of the province, who we all serve.

1040

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: Taxpayers are on the hook for a billion-dollar eHealth scandal. At the same time as running a record \$24.7-billion deficit and planning a greedy HST tax grab, the McGuinty Liberals have done nothing to recover the billion dollars they wasted in this scandal.

While the auditor's report spotted the problem, it does not assign blame to those who got rich on taxpayers' dollars. If the Premier won't tell us who is to blame, then we need a public inquiry. Are you gutting the Public Inquiries Act in an effort to block this necessary inquiry

into the McGuinty Liberals' waste of taxpayers' dollars in the eHealth scandal?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: First of all, the member reminds us that we should all actually read the words of the auditor before reaching conclusions, where he said "we saw no evidence of this." Even a public inquiry would deal with the evidence; so the auditor reaches the conclusion.

I say, secondly, the suggestion that the proposed legislation would be less than what is there now is completely wrong. The proposed legislation, in fact, would not only be what we have, it would have additional scope. We want to deliver to the people of Ontario what they need, when they need it, in the way they need it, and not have to spend too many millions of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Final supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The new act isn't just a bunch of amendments; it's a total rewrite of the existing Public Inquiries Act. Something this monumental shouldn't share time with other items in an omnibus bill.

The Premier wouldn't let go of his dirty secrets about who got rich in the eHealth scandal—were they Liberals?—and why a bureaucrat broke the law for months to block the auditor from investigating the billion-dollar boondoggle. At the same time as the public is calling for a public inquiry that reveals these secrets, the Attorney General is trying to make it harder to appoint an inquiry. As chief law officer of the crown, you are supposed to rise above politics. Isn't the Attorney General in a conflict of interest?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: As chief law officer of the crown, suggestions in this House that people have broken the law are not appropriate and should be withdrawn by that member—completely wrong. We have a rule of law in this province and in this country that needs to be respected, even within the House that makes the laws—completely wrong and completely inappropriate.

He calls—

Interjections.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Attorney General.

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Whatever inquiry is conducted by the auditor or any other forum has to be based on evidence, not the fiction that may be thrown by members opposite. The people of Ontario deserve no less than the conclusions based on facts and a strengthened Public Inquiries Act.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Minister of Health. Yesterday, the Minister of Health told parents that they would have to wait to vaccinate their school-aged children against H1N1 because this government didn't have enough vaccine to immunize kids in kindergarten. If that is true, why were millionaire professional athletes able to get the vaccination?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me tell you that our focus remains on our highest-priority groups. Today we

are really emphasizing how important it is that parents, siblings and caregivers of infants get that vaccination. They are part of our priority groups. We are sticking to the priority groups for the foreseeable future. We are hoping to be able to expand that list when supplies become available.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The minister did not answer my question. We're talking about professional, high-performance athletes, the vast majority of whom are in their twenties and thirties. But they're not the only ones who got to jump the queue. Many others have done the same at posh private clinics in Ontario. With enough money, it seems that anyone can buy their way to vaccination while kindergarten kids and their worried parents are told to wait. How could this minister have allowed this to happen?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the members of this House and the people of Ontario that I have heard reports that some people have jumped the queue. I want you to know that this is entirely unacceptable.

We are relying on our professionals to respect the priority lists. We have a real challenge in this province getting the vaccine to the people who will benefit from it the most. I have to say that we are reinforcing the message with our doctors and those who are providing the vaccine across the province.

I am looking closely into the case of the allegation that the member has made.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: In Ontario it seems quite all right for high-rollers and professional sports teams to get preferential treatment while parents of school-aged children are forced to wait—indeinitely, now—to vaccinate their kids.

The Alberta government has taken this issue seriously. They launched an immediate investigation, and heads are starting to roll. Will this minister continue to bury her head in the sand, or will she get to the bottom of how this happened and take the steps necessary to ensure that it doesn't happen again?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I share the outrage of the leader of the third party. It is completely unacceptable for anyone to be jumping the queue.

This is a global pandemic we are in the midst of now. There are priority groups. Those groups need to be respected. I don't care how famous you are, how wealthy you are, how well connected you are; you have a responsibility to all of the others to respect that priority list.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): New question. The leader of the third party.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The responsibility lies with this minister, and that's what she's not acknowledging.

GOVERNMENT SPENDING

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My next question is to the Minister of Finance. Ontario families understand that

we're in tough times, but they're worried about a system that has been cut to the bone already. Local emergency rooms are closing even while the H1N1 issue stretches capacity. Parents are fundraising over half a billion dollars a year to cover funding gaps in schools. If the government is actually interested in reducing costs—and it should be—why did government MPPs block a review by the auditor into high levels of compensation for health sector executives?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: Our government is taking a comprehensive look at expenditures.

I do want to point out to the people of Ontario that emergency rooms are not being closed. That kind of hyperbole has no place in a serious debate.

There are new investments being made in health care. Our expenditures on health care have far exceeded the rate of inflation. We have reduced wait times across a variety of important procedures.

As we move forward into the years ahead, we will have to get Ontario back to a balanced budget. We have begun a process to do that. I was pleased to note that Moody's bond rating service held Ontario's rating as steady, late last week. We have begun this process. I will begin processes with respect to public consultations. I know that Ontarians will work together to get Ontario back to balance and ensure that we can compete heartily in the future.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: The finance minister had better well know that emergency rooms are closing in this province: Port Colborne, Fort Erie, Matthews Memorial. There are a number of them that are closing, and that is the fact.

If this government was actually concerned with the fiscal balance, they would look at all of their spending, including tax giveaways to the corporate sector.

Does this minister think it's consistent to ask families to accept the closure of emergency rooms, schools that rank behind 46 US states in per-student funding, and higher sales taxes, while his government hands out \$2 billion a year in corporate tax giveaways?

1050

Hon. Dwight Duncan: The states of Michigan, New York, California and Indiana are laying teachers off, firing teachers, getting rid of them, cutting public services. We made a decision not to do that, and we stand by that decision.

I'd also suggest to the member that she may want to talk about the personal tax cuts, the fact that the Daily Bread Food Bank and a range of other poverty groups have applauded this government for the most progressive tax reform package in history.

Are these easy decisions? No. Do the times call for leadership? Yes.

That member and her party are about the status quo. They're about not responding to the jobless situation. We're about change. We're about rebuilding the economy. We're about creating jobs. That's what the policy is about. That's what it'll do, and it will, in fact, make our

public services more affordable and more accessible to all Ontarians.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Final supplementary.

Ms. Andrea Horwath: There is nothing progressive about whacking the little guy and filling the pockets of the big guy. That's what this Liberal government is all about.

With each passing day, this government grows more out of touch with real Ontarians. Well-connected corporate executives and consultants see a government that caters to them, as families are forced to deal with the closure of local emergency rooms, organize bake sales to cover the cost of school essentials, and pay 8% more—8% more—for gasoline, hydro and other daily living essentials.

Why should Ontarians believe that this government has their interests at heart when it shows them daily that it just does not care about their challenges?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: I enjoyed the lecture from the leader of the third party, but let me tell her what Hugh Mackenzie said. He's the economist and research associate at the Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives, and he also chaired the NDP Fair Tax Commission, which we'll talk about a little later on. Here's what he said: "Ontario's 2009-10 budget establishes the right direction.... It provides substantial economic stimulus. It is consistent with the new orthodoxy that relies heavily on governments to help rebuild damaged economies. It imposes some coherence on an incoherent federal plan. It increases support for low-income families and individuals. It modernizes Ontario's consumption tax." I'm with Hugh Mackenzie, prominent New Democrat. I know he has told you the same thing.

I suggest you listen to your own economist, I suggest you listen to your own adviser, and join us as we modernize the economy to create jobs and—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mrs. Christine Elliott: My question is for the Minister of Health. We know the federal government supplied Ontario with 2.2 million doses of the H1N1 vaccine. How many are on the shelf? Who knows? The minister sure doesn't. It could be 100,000; it could be half a million; it could be a million.

If you're running a 10-kilometre race and you know you've got one kilometre left, that means you've run nine kilometres. If you buy a dozen doughnuts and eight get eaten, that means you have four left. If you have 2.2 million doses of vaccine and you're talking about running out over the weekend, you must have some idea of your current inventory.

Minister, how many doses of vaccine have actually gone into arms?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What I can tell you is that we are on track, according to our public health units ac-

ross the province, to have administered the 2.2 million doses that we have received. We are on track to have those administered by the end of the weekend. Because we have expanded the number of places where people can get the vaccine, it is difficult to determine, on a day-to-day basis, exactly how much vaccine has found its way into the arms of Ontarians. But they have assured us that we're on track to get the vaccine protecting Ontarians by the end of this weekend. I will complete that in the supplementary.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: Well, I'm still not getting an answer.

Here are just a few things in Ontario that the McGuinty Liberals track more closely than the number of flu vaccines: the number of fish restocked in lakes, broken down by lake and fish species; eggs laid by chickens each year; calls to the bear wise hotline, including how many calls went to a live operator.

The health minister is managing the largest flu pandemic in 40 years, so why can't she tell us the number of vaccines in arms and those still on the shelf?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: What the member opposite should know is that it was a very high priority for us to engage more family physicians in the administration of vaccines. One of the things physicians told us was that they would be happy to deliver it, but the burden of reporting was a barrier to that, so they report to us weekly, not daily, on that.

What I can tell you, though, is that in public health clinics alone, about half a million have been vaccinated. There are another half-million doses in doctors' offices, much of which has been used for immunizations. Our hospitals and our other health care centres like long-term-care homes have another 350,000 doses that are being administered as we speak. We're working very, very hard to reach our target of administering those 2.2 million doses by the end of the weekend.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

M^{me} France Gélinas: Ma question est pour la ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée. Fran Martens is a front-line personal support worker in Windsor. She, like all of her colleagues, bathes, cleans and assists frail people of all ages in their homes. Although Fran is in close contact with 11 patients and their families every single day, she was refused the H1N1 vaccination because she was told she is not on the priority list.

Fran Martens is out and about today doing her rounds in Windsor and she's scared. She's scared because she is a care provider for persons at high risk of H1N1 and she doesn't want to bring harm to them.

My question to the minister is simple: Why are PSWs, these crucial health care workers, not considered in the priority list for H1N1?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I can assure the member opposite that personal support workers are considered health care workers and they are in the high-priority

group, so I would urge them to get their vaccination now. They do not have to wait. The lineups are eliminated in many places and certainly way, way down across the province. Personal support workers are health care workers. They are in the priority group. I would happily look into this particular case if a particular public health unit is not including them in the priority groups. They are a priority group.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

M^{me} France Gélinas: I'm glad to hear the minister say this, because she is the only one who is. We've checked throughout the province. The story of Fran Martens is repeated in every single CCAC throughout this province. There has been no directive from the community care access centres to home care agencies to encourage home care workers to get the H1N1 vaccine. In fact, if you look on the CCAC websites, you will not even see the mention of H1N1 on any of them. The CCACs oversee home care, and workers are in the community each and every day caring for the sick, many of them persons at high risk for H1N1. These workers are susceptible to the virus just like any of us, but they can also transmit the virus to the homes where they visit.

My question is simple: Why are home care workers, this important component of our health care system, not part of the pandemic plan?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I completely agree with the member opposite: Personal support workers are health care workers. They are covered. If that is in fact not clear to the public health units, to the long-term-care homes and so on, we will absolutely clarify that. Personal support workers are part of the high-priority group under the health care worker category.

FLU PANDEMIC PREPAREDNESS

Mr. Eric Hoskins: My question is also for the Minister of Health and Long-Term Care. The H1N1 pandemic has led to increased activity at hospitals right across the province. We've seen stories about hospitals coping with increased visits to their emergency departments. Sudbury Regional Hospital, for example, has seen a 30% surge in ER visits, and, as we know, it's not the only hospital experiencing a surge due to H1N1 cases. Some hospitals have even had to cancel elective surgeries in order to manage the incoming stream of patients.

We need our hospitals to be able to respond effectively to emergency situations as they emerge. Could the minister please tell this House how hospitals are managing the influx of H1N1-related visits?

1100

Hon. Deborah Matthews: Let me assure you, all hospitals in Ontario do have a plan. All hospitals are seeing an increase. They are rising to the challenge. They are coping with the increase in visits to their ERs. They are well equipped to deal with H1N1.

Since SARS, we have developed a robust critical care strategy to handle a sudden increase in volume in our intensive care units. Already there are 1,800 critical care

ventilators across the province, and because we're taking H1N1 seriously, we're adding 216 more.

In 2006, we announced \$90 million in annual funding for the provincial critical care strategy. This funding has helped hospitals supply new beds, improve technology and hire staff. It allows hospitals to manage that increased demand without compromising patient safety—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Eric Hoskins: I am also concerned about getting the vaccine to pregnant women. I know that when my wife was pregnant, and under the care of midwives, we were vigilant about taking every precaution we could to protect the health of both my wife, and our soon-to-be-born son. H1N1 is no different. I've heard from pregnant women in my riding of St. Paul's who want to get the vaccine as soon as they can.

I understand that the recommendation agreed upon by Canada's chief medical officers of health is for healthy pregnant women in the first half of their pregnancy to wait for the unadjuvanted vaccine. We heard yesterday that Ontario has now received the unadjuvanted vaccine, but pregnant women and their families are anxious to know when they'll be able to receive it.

Can the minister please provide an update on when all pregnant women can begin getting their H1N1 shots?

Hon. Deborah Matthews: I just want to underline how important it is that pregnant women do get the H1N1 vaccine. We need to protect them, and we need to protect their babies—their unborn children.

Canada has received its first shipment of the unadjuvanted vaccine. Ontario got 86,800 doses. That's enough for all pregnant women in the province. Health units are receiving the vaccine as we speak. Some are beginning to administer it today, as in Ottawa, for example. Flu clinics are distributing the 5,500 doses they received. Some health units are holding clinics just for pregnant women; some are sending the vaccine to local doctors and are instructing pregnant women where to go.

I encourage all pregnant women to talk to their doctors and find out what's right for them. We know how important the health of pregnant women and their babies is to them and their families.

PUBLIC INQUIRY LEGISLATION

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: My question is to the Attorney General. Hundreds of millions of dollars were wasted in untendered contracts and sweetheart deals with Liberal-friendly consultants in the billion-dollar eHealth scandal. Liberal friends were appointed to, and then disappeared from, the eHealth board. The Premier's own Management Board waived rules prohibiting untendered contracts so it could hand out deals itself. Liberals got rich, patients got nothing, and taxpayers footed the bill.

Why is it that rather than doing something to get the money back, you're gutting the Public Inquiries Act? Is it so taxpayers will never find out who got rich on their money?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: A few facts: First, I'm very pleased to have received the report, which made some very specific conclusions and concluded that many of the conclusions outlined by my honourable friend are not in fact the case.

Second, there is a lot of work that was produced by the team working on electronic health records. It wasn't good enough. We need the last part. That's being strengthened by the Minister of Health.

Third, we have greatly improved and in fact changed procedures that have existed for decades in this House to ensure increased accountability, increased transparency, and a better control over money—the same procedures that were in place when my friend's party was part of the government. We will continue to do what's required to ensure the most effective government is delivered to the people of the province of Ontario.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Chudleigh: The Attorney General's inaction in this matter is very disturbing. The auditor points out examples of contractors making off with taxpayers' dollars in all sorts of questionable deals. The new CEO of eHealth told the public accounts committee that she's not doing anything to recover tax dollars from the deals that she herself called inappropriate. The Attorney General is gutting the Public Inquiries Act, so it will be harder to recover the billions of dollars wasted in this scandal.

The McGuinty Liberals know who made the money—they made the deals—but we don't, because the auditor didn't name them. Doesn't the lack of effort to recover wasted tax dollars have anything to do with who got the money?

Hon. Christopher Bentley: Just to circle back to the legislation, which is supposedly the reason for the question, the proposals for the Public Inquiries Act in fact add to it, not take away from it.

When a public inquiry is called, when any form of report or inquiry or study is done by a government or an independent official, you want to get the answer to the question. You want to get it in a timely fashion. You'd rather not spend more money than you have to to get it. You want to get it so you can act on it and make government or procedures or processes more effective.

We were very greatly assisted by the auditor's report. We have changed procedures that have been in place for decades, including under the government opposite. They had every opportunity to change them, but did not. So we have changed them—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

TOXICS REDUCTION

Mr. Peter Tabuns: My question is to the Minister of the Environment. A consultation on draft regulations for the Toxics Reduction Act has ended. Groups like the Canadian Cancer Society, the Ontario College of Family Physicians and the Ontario Lung Association feel the act is now far too weak. Why is the minister gutting his own bill?

Hon. John Gerretsen: The facts couldn't be further from the truth that this member has said. The reality is that we are passing the strongest rules and regulations with respect to toxics reduction in this province. We are basically modelling it on the law that was passed in Massachusetts a number of years ago, and the amount of toxic materials that are being used in the manufacturing process as a result of the law they passed has been significantly decreased.

What we want our companies to do is, first of all, come up with plans that clearly show how they intend to reduce the amount of toxic materials they're using in the manufacturing process, and then we want them to implement those plans. That'll take some time.

We have the strongest law that we possibly can in this matter, and I think the organizations he mentioned have certainly mentioned that to us, as well; that they believe this is the right way to go.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary.

Mr. Peter Tabuns: Those groups have said that the regulations don't deliver what has to be delivered. In fact, this minister continues to use in this act the National Pollutant Release Inventory, the federal system that the federal Auditor General has criticized roundly as being inadequate.

When is the minister going to stop relying on the Harper government for environmental protection in this province and actually bring forward laws that will protect Ontarians?

Hon. John Gerretsen: I can tell you that the National Pollutant Release Inventory lists some 250 different substances that have to be reported on. We want to strengthen that system, and another way in which we're doing that is we are investing taxpayers' dollars heavily in the new green chemistry centre, which is going to come up with alternative products that can be used, instead of the toxic materials that are being used.

This is a tough law, the toughest law in Ontario. We've modelled it on legislation elsewhere in North America that has worked. We know it will work. The end result is that the people of Ontario will be better protected from a health and safety viewpoint. That's really what it's all about. It's all about having fewer toxins in our environment, so that the health of the people of Ontario is fully protected.

ABORIGINAL AFFAIRS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: My question is for the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. Six years ago, the Ontario government's relationship with aboriginal people was at an all-time low, but since then our government has been working hard to build a strong, positive relationship with aboriginal people, leadership and communities across the province.

Last week, ministers of aboriginal affairs from across Canada, including the federal Minister of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, met with leadership from five national aboriginal organizations. The meeting followed

through on a commitment made by our Premier at the last Council of the Federation to host a meeting on aboriginal issues, specifically lifelong learning and economic development. Would the minister tell us more about what happened at last week's meeting?

1110

Hon. Brad Duguid: Thank you for the question. I was indeed honoured to chair this federal-provincial-territorial-aboriginal meeting. In fact, it was the first time that aboriginal affairs ministers have gotten together across the country along with aboriginal leaders since Kelowna. So we were very, very proud that Ontario led the charge to make this happen.

Our Premier, in fact, over a year ago spoke out at a first ministers' conference indicating the need to move aboriginal issues back to the federal and national forefront. That's exactly what this meeting was intended to do and what it accomplished. In our meeting, we focused on how we could provide aboriginal people with more opportunities for education and economic development. In addition, we're looking forward to getting together again in April, where we'll solidify those recommendations, and looking forward to making much more progress in these areas, working together.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: Thank you, Minister, for your answer. Ensuring that First Nations, Metis and Inuit people have access to education and economic development opportunities will help to build a brighter future for aboriginal people and Ontario as a whole. We need to make sure that aboriginal youth, communities and families have the right opportunities to succeed. Discussing ways to provide more education and economic development opportunities for Ontario's fastest-growing population is a good step forward.

Could the minister tell us what the next steps are following the federal-provincial-territorial-aboriginal meeting?

Hon. Brad Duguid: The member is absolutely right. This working group was formed last week, and we're working on ways to close the socioeconomic gaps that exist between the aboriginal population in Ontario and across the country and the rest of Canada. We are making these recommendations and will be making them to a meeting of the Council of the Federation, with all the Premiers scheduled to meet this coming August. The working group is committed to meet next April, and that's where we hope to solidify some of the very important recommendations and the direction we will be taking.

I want to say that we should all be very, very proud of our Premier in this province, who was the first Premier to call for a first ministers' meeting on aboriginal issues, about a year or so ago. We hope that these recommendations will indeed lead to a first ministers' conference down the road.

It's great that Ontario, which was behind the other provinces six years ago, is now a leader—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

VOLUNTEER FIREFIGHTERS

Mr. Ted Arnott: My question is for the Minister of Labour. Last May, in a strange and stunning display of legislative incompetence, Liberal MPPs voted down presumptive legislation for volunteer firefighters. The minister says he's working on this and plans to extend to our volunteer firefighters the same workers' compensation protection that full-time firefighters have now had for years. Will he finally do this today when he makes his "important announcement" outside this House in Brant county?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: I thank the member for the question.

First off, I had the opportunity, the honour and the privilege to be at the rededication of the firefighters' memorial at the beginning of October, after some cowardly vandals desecrated that memorial. To hear the firefighters, fire inspectors and their families speak of the difficult, life-threatening work that firefighters do, it really touched me and all those who were present, and I know it touches all the communities across this great province of Ontario.

That's why in 2007 Premier McGuinty brought forward, with consent from this entire House, presumptive legislation for firefighters, and the member is quite right—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Mr. Ted Arnott: If this minister has something important to announce, he should make that announcement right here in this House. Instead, it would appear that he's planning to go to a riding represented by a member who, in debate, said he would support my bill, but a few minutes later stood to vote against it.

Again, my question is to the minister: What took you so long? Why did Liberal members vote against a bill that would have fixed this problem last spring? Why won't he admit that any action he might take in the future would be thanks to pressure from the PC caucus and, most importantly, from volunteer firefighters themselves? Finally, why won't this minister assure all volunteer firefighters here and now that they will finally be treated the same as their professional full-time counterparts?

Hon. Peter Fonseca: It is the McGuinty government that took leadership on presumptive legislation for firefighters across the province of Ontario. At that time, when that legislation was passed in this House, Premier McGuinty said that the legislation is open to part-time and volunteer firefighters and that we would reach out to our stakeholders and our partners. Those stakeholders and partners—the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario, the fire chiefs' association, the WSIB and others—will be present this afternoon.

I am going to Paris, Ontario, where the president of the Fire Fighters Association of Ontario resides; that's why we are going to Paris, Ontario. The other reason is because we have a champion in the member for Brant, Dave Levac, who has shaped and informed this legislation. We are—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

ADOPTION DISCLOSURE

Ms. Andrea Horwath: My question is to the Acting Premier. The McGuinty government advertises a six- to eight-week wait for access to adoption records in this province, when it really takes up to 36 months. What is the government's plan for ensuring its six- to eight-week turnaround time is actually met?

Hon. Dwight Duncan: To the Minister of Community and Social Services.

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: Yes, the adoption modification in the legislation was very successful and we have had a lot of requests. It's not the first time that I hear this comment, so we are investigating the matter. If you have any specific cases, I'd like to know and we will act accordingly.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Supplementary?

Ms. Andrea Horwath: What the minister didn't say is they rolled out a program and didn't put the infrastructure in place to actually deliver it.

Ruth Rideout and Valerie Andrews are here today, representing thousands of adoptees who have already waited far, far too long for their records. The McGuinty government has created a customer service nightmare of delays, backlogs and lack of tracking. Ruth waited 19 weeks and received incomplete information. Valerie waited 20 weeks and the CAS says delivering all her records is going to take another 36 months.

With November being Adoption Month, will the minister agree to meet with people like Ruth and Valerie and to fix Ontario's adoption disclosure system once and for all?

Hon. Madeleine Meilleur: I'll turn that over to the Minister of Government Services.

Hon. Harinder S. Takhar: I'm actually very pleased to provide some information about the data, such as how many applications we have received and what's happening with them.

As of August 17, 2009, the ministry had received 6,505 applications for disclosure vetoes from adopted persons or birth parents who prefer to keep their personal information private. The ministry also received 1,500 applications from people who agreed to allow information regarding their cases to be shared but requested that they not be contacted by the other party. The ministry also received 2,100 applications from people indicating their contact preferences.

We have received a lot of information and a lot of applications. We are working through it and responding to them as quickly as possible.

RAIL LINE CONSTRUCTION

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: I have a question for the Minister of the Environment. Mr. Minister, you gave a green light to the approval of the Georgetown corridor rail expansion environmental assessment, which includes the Pearson-Union line. At the same time, however, you also

introduced 18 strict conditions placed on the approvals—that is, the expansion.

However, there are some questions that need to be answered. One of the important questions that need to be answered is your condition that all trains running along that line be tier 4 diesel trains, which are supposed to be clean. Some of my constituents want to know what exactly these tier 4 diesel trains are, when they will be available and how they will protect human health and our environment.

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me first of all applaud the members from Davenport and from York South–Weston for their advocacy in this matter, because they've been very concerned about this throughout.

The 18 tough conditions include the requirement that Metrolinx implement the newest technology, the tier 4 engine technology. Now, while the technology is not yet available, the EPA standards in the States have changed to the effect that they have to be available by 2015. From past experience, when these kinds of conditions are imposed by the EPA, manufacturers will actually design to the EPA standards. They know what standards are expected of them by 2015. It means that the newest line will have the newest technology right from day one, because the line is expected to come on stream by 2015. The result will be that there will be a 90% reduction in the particulate matter that is being emitted over the technology that's available today, and also—

1120

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Tony Ruprecht: A reduction in nitrogen oxide: I'd like to know more about that. Thank you, Minister.

While the decision on the environmental assessment has been made, there remains much more to be done. At a recent meeting attended by more than 1,000 residents, one issue was pretty prominent. My constituents want to know that they will continue to be consulted, and in what way.

One of the conditions, Minister, that you placed on this Metrolinx development—you actually imposed these 18 conditions, and they need to be implemented in terms especially of air monitoring and the reporting plan. That's my question. For instance, the Toronto District School Board's health committee voted to have a role in the ongoing air monitoring study. Will the minister accommodate their request and include the TDSB and our residents in the decision-making process, since they are directly affected by this significant—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. John Gerretsen: Let me just continue my answer from before. The new technology will have a 90% particulate matter reduction as well as an 80% nitrogen oxide reduction.

And, yes, one of the other conditions is the fact that Metrolinx has to develop and implement an ambient air monitoring and reporting plan, and that plan must be put into place after consultation with the public. Obviously,

the Toronto District School Board will be consulted throughout. They've got a major interest in this as well, as there are schools in the immediate area.

Metrolinx, as a matter of fact, is required to create a working group that contains, at minimum, Toronto Public Health and Environment Canada, and I would strongly suggest that it would include the Toronto District School Board, as well as, obviously, the public from the general area.

We want to make sure that we can reduce the amount of pollution that's in the air by getting as much transit in the GTA as available. This is a major step forward, but we also want to make sure—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Frank Klees: To the minister responsible for children: On October 20, I brought to the minister's attention the multi-million dollar cut to the York Region Children's Aid Society. In response, the minister committed—and I quote from Hansard—that she would work “to ensure that children are put first and that their outcomes are a priority” and that she would work with the society. She further committed, and I quote again: “Our regional office is ... working with the York CAS to develop a financial plan to address the challenges.”

I'd like to ask the minister this: Have those meetings taken place? What progress is her regional office making with the York Region CAS to ensure that that society is adequately funded to address the issues there?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm pleased to have a chance to speak about this really important issue. As I've said in previous opportunities, we're absolutely committed to Ontario's kids and to finding a pathway to sustainability for Ontario's children's aid societies.

Over the last number of years we've had the opportunity to see funding increases year over year. But in this particular year, we are working with children's aid societies across the province because we have clearly said we will not be able to provide any additional funds this year, other than those funds that they have received in the budget.

With respect to the York CAS in particular, like all CASs across the province, our regional offices are actively meeting with them, working through cash-flow management issues, looking at partnership opportunities, reaching out to the board and the executive director.

Personally, I have had an excellent working opportunity with the board chair of the York CAS and have committed our regional office to continuing to work with them, and that's exactly what—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary?

Mr. Frank Klees: The minister received a letter this week from the York Region Police Services Board. In that letter, the York board makes this point: “It is the board's belief that this decision will have a severe impact

on the safety and well-being of our vulnerable children and their families.” The decision being referred to is the cut in the budget. It goes on to say, “York Regional Police relies heavily on York Region CAS to assist in child-protection-related investigations. This decision may have an adverse effect on the joint response to child welfare and domestic violence cases.”

Apart from the 30,000-foot-level response I’m getting from the minister, I would ask her to do this: Address the concerns of the York Regional Police services board and ensure that this York Region Children’s Aid Society is properly—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I do think it is imperative that in this House we deal with the facts as they exist. The funding for this CAS is up 34% since 2003-04. The number of child welfare investigations is down 5%. Over the last decade, the funding is up 188%. So this is a CAS that we have worked with closely.

It’s also a CAS that is, at this point in time, really examining their ability to form partnerships. As the member knows, families come to work with children’s aid societies for a number of reasons. They might have circumstances where they are involved with the police, they are involved with the victim witness assistance program or they are involved with a number of issues. That is exactly the type of partnership that the regional office is working with the York CAS to develop right now. We’re absolutely committed to the kids of this province. We need to develop partnerships to make sure that our communities can best serve those children and families—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

FOREST INDUSTRY

Mr. Howard Hampton: My question is for the Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry. Earlier I asked the minister how the McGuinty Liberal government could provide the Buchanan Group of forest companies with tens of millions of dollars of loans, grants and other financial benefits, and yet the more than 2,000 laid-off Buchanan workers across northwestern Ontario could be told, “No money to cover your severance pay or your termination pay.”

My question today: At the same time that the workers have been told, “You’re out of luck,” Liberal candidates in northwestern Ontario, Liberal riding associations, and the Liberal Party have received over \$65,000 in financial contributions from Buchanan companies and Buchanan executives. Can the minister explain how that could happen? The Liberal government has money for the companies and the companies have money for the Liberal Party, Liberal candidates, Liberal riding associations—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

Hon. Michael Gravelle: I appreciate the question. What I fail to understand from the member for Kenora is the lack of understanding that the challenge in terms of the forestry sector certainly across the province, but in northwestern Ontario perhaps in particular with the Buchanan group being such an important force in terms of employment, is that we believe that the best solution in terms of helping the workers, helping those that have been impacted, is to work with the company to try and help the operation potentially get back up and running. We understand, indeed, that the Terrace Bay Pulp operation is a specific example, and if we are able to help the company get back up and operating, that will have an impact, obviously, on sawmills around the area as well, which are impacted by the operation of Terrace Bay Pulp.

Again, I’m a little puzzled as to why you don’t agree we also need to get people back to work. That’s the key to our future positive elements in terms of—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I have a lot of ideas on how to get workers back to work, but there is this issue: There’s lots of money from the Buchanan companies and Buchanan executives for Liberal riding associations, Liberal election candidates and the Liberal Party, and there’s lots of money flowing from the McGuinty Liberal government to the Buchanan Group of Companies, but the workers who have been laid off—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I just would ask the honourable member to be cautious in imputing motive in his questioning.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I’m not imputing motive; I’m simply stating what’s on the public record. The fact of the matter is, the workers who are entitled under Ontario law to have their severance pay and termination pay have received nothing. As far as I know, the Liberal Party and Liberal candidates are not entitled under law, yet the Buchanan Group of Companies has lots of money to give to the Liberal Party, Liberal candidates—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Minister?

1130

Hon. Michael Gravelle: The fact is that we are working with all the forestry companies in the province in a variety of ways. We have provided incentive programs that have been of benefit to AbitibiBowater, Domtar, Buchanan and many other companies in the province. Those incentive programs have helped maintain jobs and have helped get companies back up and running. Indeed, again, I presume the member would have supported the efforts we made to get the Terrace Bay pulp operation back up and running in 2006.

We are working equally hard with all the companies, and we are very proud of the incentive programs that have been brought forward by our government over the last three years. The energy rebate program, again, is available to all major pulp and paper operations.

I find it strange and rather unfortunate that the member is taking this approach when, indeed, I would think

he would have the same goal in mind, which is to find a way to get people back to work, which is our priority. That's what we're working on all the time.

CRIME PREVENTION

Mr. Mike Colle: To the Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services: Minister, this week is Crime Prevention Week. The hard-working men and women at 13 division and 32 division in my constituency, who do a heck of a job in dealing with crime, want to tell you that they also believe in the prevention programs. They think that, yes, we need good police officers on the road, but we also need good crime prevention programs. They want me to ask you: What are some of these crime prevention initiatives that your ministry and our government are doing to help the police in their day-to-day work, where they know they've got to fight crime but also fight the causes of crime?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I want to thank the member for the question, because he and his constituents are absolutely right: Crime prevention is everyone's business, and it's more than just putting police officers on the street. We're very, very proud of our government's investment of \$68 million a year to put 1,700 new police officers on the streets of Ontario. That's good. We're proud of that.

But you know what? Crime prevention isn't in isolation, with only the police services becoming involved. Each and every member in Ontario has to do his or her part. It's paying dividends, because Ontario has experienced a 4% decline in overall crime and a 5% decrease in the severity of crime. We work together and we will continue to work together. It is—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. Supplementary.

Mr. Mike Colle: Thank you, Mr. Minister. One of the real concerns in my riding of Eglinton—Lawrence, especially in some of the high-risk areas, is crime involving young people, all the way down to 11- and 10-year-olds sometimes. They're committing serious crimes. In fact, this past summer, with the city strikes, we basically had a summer from hell in some of these parts of my riding because the programs weren't there and the police were saying, "Bring the programs back, especially for youth."

I want to know: What are some of these programs that help the police prevent crime and that are targeted at these high-risk youth in this province?

Hon. Rick Bartolucci: I'd ask the Minister of Children and Youth Services to answer that.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I'm very pleased to have an opportunity to speak to this critically important issue. In communities right across the province, we all need to work together to ensure that youth have the opportunity to take a pathway towards a prosperous life for themselves and their future children and families rather than to take a pathway into crime.

Just yesterday I had the opportunity to sit down with the Honourable Justice Roy McMurtry and talk to him

about the work that he has done and look at the ways that we, as a collective, need to work together to ensure that youth have the opportunities that they need.

That's why I'm so proud to be part of a government that has seen an investment in the youth opportunities strategy of more than \$21 million. That is nearly double last year's investment, and that includes \$1.1 million to expand youth and policing.

I know that for the communities that receive that support, it has been a very powerful tool to bring youth into the police services. It's—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you. New question.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Jim Wilson: My question is to the Minister of Children and Youth Services. Minister, you would know that the Children's Aid Society of Simcoe County has an over \$5-million operating deficit this year. In fact, it's \$5.5 million.

On the local news yesterday, particularly on Barrie radio news, they were reporting that your government had given the children's aid society one million new dollars. It sounded like \$1 million in addition to help them with their deficit; it turns out that that was a \$1-million cash advance for money they would have received in January, the same fiscal year as now, and it just means that they won't run out of money in November; they'll run out of money in February. As you know, the fiscal year is March 31. I'm wondering, Minister, what you're going to do to help them with their deficit and why you don't care about vulnerable children as a priority for your government.

Hon. Laurel C. Broten: I would say to the member opposite that I've had many occasions in this House to talk about our commitment to Ontario's kids, and it is precisely our commitment to Ontario's kids and to the sustainability of children's aid societies that we have increased investments year over year. This year, everyone in this House knows the financial circumstances of the province. We have said to children's aid societies, "We have budgeted more for you, but we cannot give you more if you spend more than is in your budget." That is why we are working daily with children's aid societies across the province, like the work being done with the Simcoe children's aid to help them find a pathway to sustainability: examples like working through budget, finding partnerships and, in circumstances where necessary, providing cash advances as we have done with the children's aid society. We're doing our work every single day to make sure that they're sustainable. We look for partnerships across the—

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Thank you.

VISITORS

Hon. M. Aileen Carroll: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I would like, with your permission, Mr.

Speaker, to add an addendum to the list of people who joined us today and will be joining us a little later for the Ontario Trillium Foundation's Great Grants Awards. We omitted to mention that in addition to the ones I did mention, David McLaren of the Ojibwa Saugeen First Nations territories is also a winner.

MEMBER'S BIRTHDAY

Hon. Jim Watson: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm very pleased to report that today is the Minister of Health's birthday, and we wish her a very happy birthday.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Neither of those were points of order, but happy birthday.

The time for question period has ended. This house stands recessed until 1 p.m. this afternoon.

The House recessed from 1137 to 1300.

INTRODUCTION OF VISITORS

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I'm very excited to introduce to this House my very best friend, Dorothy St. George, and her daughter, Mary Redfearn.

Mr. Charles Sousa: I would like to welcome to this House an extraordinary businessman and an outstanding community volunteer. He launched and supports the Frances Rose Foundation Dinner of Champions to help in the fight against diabetes. My fellow colleagues, please welcome to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario Mr. Dominic Virgilio.

MEMBERS' STATEMENTS

YORK REGION CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY

Mr. Frank Klees: Earlier today during question period I raised the issue of the York Region Children's Aid Society's funding shortfall with the minister responsible for children. Her response was disappointing, to say the least. She deflected by referring to funding increases the York CAS has received since 2003 and over the last decade. That is irrelevant to the fact that the York CAS is facing a funding crisis today. And to say, as the minister did, that the government has no money is unacceptable. It's precisely during these difficult economic times that the government should be prioritizing the care of our most vulnerable, and our children should be at the top of that list.

In a letter to the minister this week, the York Region Police Services Board said this in response to the proposed funding cuts: "York Region CAS is one of our most important partners in ensuring safety and security in our communities. The CAS provides an invaluable service to the vulnerable children of York region. The board

urges the province to reconsider its funding decision to ensure that the safety and protection of our children continues to remain a top priority."

I implore the minister to heed the warning of the police services board and the board of the York CAS to adequately fund these critical services to York region's most vulnerable children and ensure that York CAS is adequately funded.

WILLIAM DAVIS

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: On November 2, I had the pleasure of attending the opening night of the Ontario Chamber of Commerce's 2009 Ontario Economic Summit.

The Ontario Chamber of Commerce is a federation of chambers of commerce and boards of trade representing 60,000 businesses. On November 2, the chamber announced the first recipient of their Visionary Award. This new award was created to honour an individual who made a significant contribution to business, public policy, labour or the social fabric of Ontario through leadership, collaboration and integrity.

I am pleased to report that the inaugural recipient of this prestigious award was Brampton's own William G. Davis, the 18th Premier of Ontario, or, as he's more fondly known by the people of my community, our own Brampton Billy.

Mr. Davis accepted the award with humility, attributing his success as Premier to the values passed down to him by his parents. "I grew up in a household where they all felt we had some responsibility to the community and to give back to the province in which we grew up."

The award was presented in front of a crowd of business, labour, education, government and non-government leaders, with tributes made by Senator Hugh Segal, the Honourable Jim Bradley and the deputy leader of the PC Party, Christine Elliott, all of whom spoke of Mr. Davis's civility and integrity which Mr. Davis exhibited during his 26-year career in provincial politics.

I encourage all the members of this House to join me in congratulating Brampton's own William G. Davis for his acceptance of this inaugural Ontario Visionary Award.

ABILITIES CENTRE

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I'm pleased to rise today to advise the House about an extraordinary event that I attended in my riding two evenings ago at the Oshawa Little Theatre. It was actually a Christmas concert; it was called Christmas at Home. I just wanted to raise it because it was organized by volunteers—three people from the community: Mr. Dan Clancy, Mr. Chris Janusitis and Mr. Mike Hill—for the purpose of supporting an organization in my riding called the Abilities Centre, which is a sports, recreation and performing arts facility that's being built in Whitby for people with varying degrees of special needs. It's going to be completely accessible and barrier-free, and construction is expected to begin on it within the next few months.

This was a fundraising effort for the Abilities Centre, which is also aimed at turning people's thinking around and shifting the paradigm to see abilities rather than disabilities. This group did a wonderful job and featured performances by a list of people who I think will be well known to some members of this chamber: Dan Clancy, Ian Thomas, Murray McLauchlan, Lloyd Knight, Coco Love Alcorn, the group of two women known as Dala, Jacob Abrahamse, and Sabrina Moreino.

I'd just like to take this opportunity to thank the organizers, to thank the performers and to thank all of the people who came out to celebrate this wonderful organization called the Abilities Centre.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I want to remind members of the House that we're going to have an important debate here this afternoon on a motion put forward by my colleague Howard Hampton, and that is on the issue of children's aid societies. We are seeing across not only northern Ontario but also the rest of the province that children's aid societies are being advised that their budgets are being cut.

I can tell you that in the riding I reside in, I have a number of children's aid societies. You've got the Timmins and district children's aid, you've got centre Jeanne Sauvé, you've got Payukotayno, and you've also got Kunuwanimano, all of which are under extreme distress when it comes to what they're learning from the ministry as we speak.

The centre Jeanne Sauvé, we know, is going to lose \$700,000 to \$900,000, depending on whose numbers you look at. I just want to put that in perspective: \$700,000 or \$900,000 in that particular children's aid that provides services to kids from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake—aboriginal, francophone and anglophone children—really is going to make a dent in their ability to be able to respond to the needs that they have to respond to by legislation.

At Payukotayno, it's the same story: over \$1 million for the children's aid society that's providing services on the James Bay coast.

These are organizations that are legislated to protect our children. If we, as legislators, and this government can't see fit to find a way to make sure we can protect the most vulnerable people in our society, what does that say about us?

I look forward to the debate that we're going to have this afternoon. I'm urging all members of the House to support Mr. Howard Hampton's motion, and for us to do what needs to be done to protect the most vulnerable people in this province, and that is children.

EVENT IN OAK RIDGES-MARKHAM

Ms. Helena Jaczek: On October 9, I attended a special blessing ceremony at the Mahamevnawa Bhavana Asapuwa meditation centre in my riding of Oak Ridges-

Markham. Led by monks from Sri Lanka, the ceremony featured the teachings of the Sakyamuni Buddha.

Since its opening in July 2006, the centre, under the leadership of Mahinda Gunasekera, has drawn a large number of lay devotees who benefit from the sermons, meditation sessions and recitation of the precepts. In addition, the centre teaches meditation and Buddha's philosophy to children and youth in both the Sinhala and English languages.

The Sri Lankan community is a very special part of my riding. I have a personal connection to Sri Lanka, as my British forebears were tea planters there for many generations. My grandfather, as a British colonial civil servant, was instrumental in the peaceful transition to independence in 1948.

I was honoured to speak at this highly spiritual event and meet so many committed, talented and influential people who work so hard for the benefit of their community.

I wish to thank Sumith Piyadasa and Akila Malwatta, the event organizers, who created an unforgettable experience with this blessing ceremony. In addition, the refreshments following the ceremony were delicious and, of course, washed down by Ceylon tea.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I rise today to comment on H1N1 clinics in my riding of Parry Sound-Muskoka.

It is clear that this government's H1N1 vaccination program is seriously flawed. From its delayed inception to its ineffective implementation, the McGuinty Liberals have demonstrated a complete and utter lack of leadership and planning during this time of crisis.

In Toronto last week, thousands of people waited for hours in the cold and the rain to receive their H1N1 vaccination. But in my riding, wait times were not the issue. Initially, no clinics were announced for several communities, including the towns of Bracebridge, Burk's Falls and the Almaguin region.

Citizens were quick to respond. One wrote to me in disbelief saying, "We are being totally neglected when it comes to H1N1 protection." Health units responded by adding clinic location and dates.

It would be easy to blame the local health units, but let me be clear: It's not their fault. They received such late notification that they had to scramble to get organized, and they are working hard and doing their best.

Yesterday during question period, the Minister of Health asked members to inform her if there are any problems with H1N1 clinics. But the people of my riding, and indeed of this province, expect her to know about the problems. After all, isn't it the job of the Minister of Health to be informed about problems on the ground?

1310

REMEMBRANCE DAY

Mr. Charles Sousa: I rise today to speak about Remembrance Day and the valiant contributions made by

residents of my riding of Mississauga South. Every November 11, we pause and remember the brave men and women who have fought throughout our history to protect our freedom.

In Port Credit, the Royal Canadian Legion Branch 82 will be holding their annual Remembrance Day service and parade. The parade will start from the Legion and march to Trinity Anglican Church. Following the service at the church, wreaths from the governments of Canada and Ontario will be laid, together with others, at the cenotaph on Stavebank Road.

Army, navy and air force veterans in Lakeview will be holding their annual Armistice Day parade this Sunday, November 8. Following the parade, a service will be held to honour those who have fallen, and a wreath will be laid at the cenotaph in Lakeview.

It's appropriate that we in south Mississauga and throughout Ontario pay homage every year to our Canadian fighting men and women, especially as the people of Mississauga have made great contributions to our nation's war efforts.

In 1915, Lakeview became the home of Canada's first airport, the Curtiss School of Aviation. There, Canadian pilots trained for the great struggle that awaited them on the Western Front.

In 1939, a munitions factory was built in Lakeview, which supplied our troops for the next six years as they helped free the nations of Europe. During this time, the plant employed 40,000 women as welders, machinists and tool and die makers.

Some notable veterans include our former mayor of Mississauga, His Worship Ron Searle. He served in the Toronto Scottish Regiment in World War II. Joining in 1936, he served right up until September 1945. During his service, he was shot in the leg three times by German snipers in Normandy, but thankfully he survived to come home and lead the newly incorporated city of Mississauga.

Another south Mississauga resident, Dorothy Jamison, served in her native England with the Women's Auxiliary Air Force. In fact, when Winston Churchill came to inspect the fighter control operations tower, it was Dorothy whom Sir Winston chose to be the guide.

We owe a great deal to the people of Mississauga who put themselves in harm's way to protect us and the freedoms we enjoy, and on November 11 we will remember them.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to rise today. I'm going to commend the people in my riding of Oakville. Communities across this province and across this country have been rolling out Canada's H1N1 vaccine, the largest immunization program in our country's history.

We know the challenges associated with it.

Oakville and Halton region have not avoided the unanticipated demand, and a major road was closed in

Oakville to deal with the crowds. More than 17,000 people have been vaccinated in Halton. Many have waited in line for hours, and yet here are the headlines from letters to the editor in the Oakville Beaver: "Vaccine Lineup Brought Out the Best in People," "Flu Shot Wait was Unforgettable."

These letters go on to compliment Halton region's health care workers and members of the Halton Regional Police, who managed the crowd and provided—I quote one resident—"encouragement, information, conversation and a feeling of safety." I'd like to commend the health care workers of Halton region and the Halton Regional Police for their hard work.

Finally, I want to commend the people of my community of Oakville. Bruce Craig, one of those who waited, wrote, "It was moving to witness the extreme patience shown by the children of all ages, who played as best they could and without being too cranky, and their parents, who waited and waited and waited."

Their patience and determination to wait for the vaccine deserves to be recognized by this Legislature as a way that Canadians should act in a time of crisis.

FLU IMMUNIZATION

Mr. David Oraziotti: I rise in the House today to congratulate the health care workers and other community officials in my riding of Sault Ste. Marie. The Group Health Centre and the Algoma public health unit have been working with local organizations to ensure that the H1N1 vaccine is being distributed quickly and efficiently to residents in my community of Sault Ste. Marie.

For the past 12 years, the Group Health Centre and the public health unit have been working together to book appointments for the seasonal flu shot to eliminate lineups. They are putting the same system to use for the H1N1 vaccination with great success. The Group Health Centre has had electronic records since 1997, and is able to identify high-priority groups and ensure that they receive those appointments first. As patients are immunized, vaccine dosages and other relevant medical information are automatically entered into their record.

A number of articles commending the health system in Sault Ste. Marie have appeared in the *Globe and Mail* and the *Toronto Star*. This is not the first time the medical community in my riding has received provincial and national praise. Roy Romanow, the former head of the Royal Commission on the Future of Health Care in Canada, called its approach "the best-kept secret in the country," and Michael Dexter, the chairman of the Health Council of Canada, told local officials in Sault Ste. Marie that they had built an enviable track record in procedures and co-operation.

In addition to the clinics run by the APH and the group health centre, evening clinics have been set up at area schools to ensure that there's greater access to the vaccination.

All of the public officials have a difficult job to ensure that the most vulnerable members of the community are

protected from this illness, and I want to congratulate them for their organization, professionalism and compassion.

MOTIONS

STANDING COMMITTEE ON FINANCE AND ECONOMIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Brad Duguid: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I move that the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be authorized to meet during the week of January 25, 2010, and on Monday, February 1, Tuesday, February 2, and Wednesday, February 3, 2010, for the purpose of conducting pre-budget consultations.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I believe we have unanimous consent to put forward a motion without notice regarding certain private members' public business.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Agreed? Agreed.

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I move that the order of the House referring Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement savings, to the Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods, to the Standing Committee on Justice Policy be discharged; and

That the order of the House referring Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, to the Standing Committee on General Government be discharged; and

That Bills 14, 96, 106 and 132 be referred instead to the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills; and

That the Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills be authorized to meet according to the following schedule:

—On Wednesday, November 18, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 96, An Act respecting protection for registered retirement

savings, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, November 25, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 106, An Act to provide for safer communities and neighbourhoods, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, December 2, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 14, An Act to deem that the Building Code and the Fire Code require fire detectors, interconnected fire alarms and non-combustible fire escapes, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill; and

—On Wednesday, December 9, 2009, from 9 a.m. to 10 a.m. for the purpose of public hearings on Bill 132, An Act to amend the Liquor Licence Act, and from noon to 1 p.m. for clause-by-clause consideration of the bill.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Are all members comfortable with the motion?

All those in favour? I declare the motion carried.

Motion agreed to.

PETITIONS

ELMVALE DISTRICT HIGH SCHOOL

Mr. Jim Wilson: "To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Elmvale District High School is an important part of the community of Elmvale and surrounding area; and

"Whereas the school is widely recognized as having high educational requirements and is well known for producing exceptional graduates who have gone on to work as professionals in health care, agriculture, community safety, the trades and many other fields that give back to the community; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty promised during the 2007 election that he would keep rural schools open when he declared that 'Rural schools help keep communities strong, which is why we're not only committed to keeping them open—but strengthening them'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty found \$12 million to keep school swimming pools open in Toronto but hasn't found any money to keep an actual rural school open in Elmvale;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Minister of Education support the citizens of Elmvale and flow funding to the local school board so that Elmvale District High School can remain open to serve the vibrant community of Elmvale and surrounding area."

I agree with this petition, and I'll sign it.

1320

TAXATION

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario.

"Whereas the residents of Oxford do not want Dalton McGuinty's new sales tax, which will raise the cost of goods and services they use every day; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for gasoline for their cars, heat, telephone, cable and Internet services for their homes, and will be applied to home sales over \$500,000; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax of 13% will cause everyone to pay more for meals under \$4, haircuts, funeral services, gym memberships, newspapers, and lawyer and accountant fees; and

"Whereas the McGuinty Liberals' new sales tax grab will affect everyone in the province: seniors, students, families, farmers and low-income Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty Liberal government not increase taxes for Ontario families."

SOCIAL SERVICES FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I have a petition addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially want to thank Sue Taggart of Woodlawn Avenue in Mississauga for having sent this to me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas the population in Peel has tripled from 400,000 residents to 1.2 million between 1980 to present. Human services funding has not kept pace with that growth. Peel receives only one third the per capita social service funding of other Ontario communities; and

"Whereas residents of Peel cannot obtain social services in a timely fashion. Long waiting lists exist for many Peel region service providers. The child poverty level in Peel has grown from 14% to 20% between 2001 and 2006 ... ; and

"Whereas Ontario's Places to Grow legislation predicts substantial future growth, further challenging our already stretched service providers to respond to population growth;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the province of Ontario allocate social services funding on the basis of population size, population growth, relevant social indicators and special geographic conditions;

"That the province provide adequate growth funding for social services in Peel region; and

"That Ontario develop, in consultation with high-growth stakeholders, a human services strategy for high-growth regions to complement Ontario's award-winning Places to Grow strategy."

I agree with this petition. I'm pleased to affix my signature in support and to ask page Katelyn to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario, and it reads as follows:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004, he brought in a brand-new tax on income, that they inaccurately claimed was going to 'health care'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it;

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes, once and for all, on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I agree with this petition and will affix my signature to it as well.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: I'm pleased to present this petition, addressed to the Ontario Legislative Assembly. I especially would like to thank Bart Konieczek from Plainsman Road in the beautiful town of Streetsville for having collected these signatures for me. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to

'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I am pleased to sign and wholeheartedly support this petition and to ask page Madeline, on her last day with us, to carry it for me.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to do with Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare funding. It reads:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas demand for health services is expected to continue to rise with a growing retirement population in Muskoka-East Parry Sound; and

"Whereas recent funding cuts include the loss of health care services at the Burk's Falls health centre, reductions in acute care beds at both hospitals and cuts to services such as physiotherapy; and

"Whereas the government is providing hospitals with funding increases of roughly 2%, but costs for health care salaries negotiated by the ministry and other fixed costs are increasing at a rate of 4% to 5% each year; and

"Whereas hospitals will face ongoing budget cuts as a result of insufficient funding by the province of Ontario, despite collecting \$12 billion in health taxes from Ontarians;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the McGuinty government and Minister of Health provide adequate increases in the operating budget of Muskoka Algonquin Healthcare to maintain current health services for the people of Muskoka-East Parry Sound and provide long-term-care beds for Muskoka-East Parry Sound."

I support this petition and give it to page Rebecca.

PARENTING EDUCATION

Mr. Bob Delaney: On behalf of the hard-working member for Niagara Falls, my trusty seatmate for the past six years, I'm pleased to present this petition addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario. It reads as follows:

"Whereas effective parenting practices do not come instinctively and parenting is our most crucial social role, parenting and human development courses need to be taught to all secondary school students. Parenting education will: reduce teen pregnancies; reduce the rate of costly fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and increase the number of healthy pregnancies; reduce the number of costly social problems related to ineffective parenting practices; and improve the 'social fabric' of Ontario to create a more civil society. Parenting education for students is considered to be socially valuable by a majority of adults of voting age and should be included as a ... credit course within the Ontario curriculum;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the requirements for the Ontario secondary school diploma to include one senior level (grade 11 or 12) credit course in parenting education."

I'm pleased, on behalf of the member from Niagara Falls, to sign this petition and to ask page Jessica to carry it for me.

TAXATION

Mr. Ted Arnott: I have another petition against the latest McGuinty tax grab and it reads as follows:

"To the Legislative Assembly of Ontario:

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty said he wouldn't raise taxes in the 2003 election, but in 2004 he brought in a brand new tax on income that they inaccurately claimed was going to 'health care'; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty will increase taxes yet again with his new 13% combined sales tax, at a time when families and businesses can least afford it; and

"Whereas Dalton McGuinty's new 13% sales tax will increase the cost of goods and services that families and businesses buy every day, such as: coffee, newspapers and magazines; gas at the pumps; home heating oil and electricity; postage stamps; haircuts; dry cleaning; home renovations; veterinary care; and arena ice and soccer field rentals;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Dalton McGuinty government wake up to Ontario's current economic reality and stop raising taxes once and for all on Ontario's hard-working families and businesses."

I have affixed my signature to it as well because I am in full agreement.

CHILD CUSTODY

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): The member for Mississauga—Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Thank you again, Speaker. It's very charitable of you.

My seatmate, the member for Niagara Falls, has another petition which, on his behalf, I'd like to present and read. It's addressed to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario and it reads:

"We, the people of Ontario, deserve and have the right to request an amendment to the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents, as requested in Bill 33, put forward by MPP Kim Craiton.

1330

"Whereas subsection 20(2.1) requires parents and others with custody of children to refrain from unreasonably placing obstacles to personal relations between the children and their grandparents"—and there are a number of other sections that I'll skip here in the interests of time;

"Whereas subsection 24(2.2) requires a court that is considering custody of a child to take into consideration each applicant's willingness to facilitate as much contact between the child and each parent and grandparent as is consistent with the best interests of the child;

"We, the undersigned, hereby petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to amend the Children's Law Reform Act to emphasize the importance of children's relationships with their parents and grandparents."

On behalf of the member for Niagara Falls, I'm pleased to affix my signature to this petition and once again ask page Madeline to carry it for me.

SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

Mr. Norm Miller: I have a petition to the Legislative Assembly of Ontario to save Ontario's independent school bus operators, and it reads:

"Whereas the Ontario Ministry of Education, in collaboration with the school boards of Ontario, is entertaining or proceeding with a request for proposal (RFP) to obtain transportation services, with the intention of eliminating the current process; and

"Whereas this concept strongly favours large international operators who are in a position to underbid local, small, existing, independent operations; and

"Whereas independent school bus operators form an integral part of the communities in which they operate and contribute to the social and economic well-being of the community; and

"Whereas local school bus operators support other local businesses such as insurance brokers, gas station operators, farming operations, financial institutions, retail outlets and professional services such as dentists, chiropractors and doctors; and

"Whereas school boards already utilize a procurement process where they set the price for school bus services, and this process has proven to be cost-effective; and

"Whereas the outcomes of the RFP pilot projects have proven that local bus operators will lose their routes in an RFP process based on price first and quality second; and

"Whereas the experience in other jurisdictions has proven that, while there may be short-term cost savings to an RFP process, in the long run the process reduces competition and costs eventually go up when there are only one or two large operators left to tender;

"Therefore, be it resolved that the undersigned Ontario parents, students, community leaders, education professionals and business owners call on the Ontario government to address the concerns of the Independent School Bus Operators Association (ISBOA), abandon the RFP process, and adopt a process that ensures small and medium-sized school bus companies continue to be able to do business in their communities."

I support this petition.

HOSPITAL FUNDING

Mr. Bob Delaney: Although I have read this petition once, I had promised the Effort group of Pakistani professionals that on their behalf I would read it in the assembly, so this is for Effort in Mississauga. I especially want to thank Shahid Ali, Zaheer Alam and Husain

Naqvi for having collected the signatures. It reads as follows:

"Whereas wait times for access to surgical procedures in the western GTA area served by the Mississauga Halton LHIN are growing despite the ongoing capital project activity at the hospitals within the Mississauga Halton LHIN boundaries; and

"Whereas 'day surgery' procedures could better be performed in an off-site facility. An ambulatory surgery centre would greatly increase the ability of surgeons to perform more procedures, reduce wait times for patients and free up operating theatre space in hospitals for more complex procedures that may require post-operative intensive care unit support and a longer length of stay in hospital;

"We, the undersigned, petition the Legislative Assembly of Ontario as follows:

"That the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care allocate funds in its 2009-10 capital budget to begin planning and construction of an ambulatory surgery centre located in western Mississauga to serve the Mississauga-Halton area and enable greater access to 'day surgery' procedures that comprise about four fifths of all surgical procedures performed."

I'm pleased to sign and support this petition and to ask page Matthew to carry it for me.

VISITOR

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): I'd ask all members to join me in welcoming, in the west members' gallery today, Jeannette Runciman, wife of the honourable member from Leeds-Grenville. Jeannette, welcome to Queen's Park.

PRIVATE MEMBERS' PUBLIC BUSINESS

SENATORS' SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

Mr. Runciman moved second reading of the following bill:

Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada / Projet de loi 67, Loi prévoyant l'élection en Ontario de candidats à des nominations au Sénat du Canada.

The Speaker (Hon. Steve Peters): Pursuant to standing order 98, the member has 12 minutes for his presentation.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, and for the benefit of Hansard, I want to say that my wife's name is spelled with two Ns and two Ts in the rare occasion when her name is referenced in the Hansard, but it's quite an honour.

Mr. Speaker, I think as you know, I have been a long-time supporter of an elected Senate. This is the third time that I've introduced this legislation, starting in 2004—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Keep trying, Bob.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: And for my friend to the left, this is the first time that it has actually been called for debate and vote.

At the outset, I want to thank and congratulate and commend Canada's only elected senator at the moment, Bert Brown from Alberta, who is a true gentleman and a real champion speaker of the cause of an elected Senate. He ran three times and was appointed by Prime Minister Harper after the third election and has been working his way across the country, meeting with Premiers and legislators to talk about an elected Senate, to persuade them that this is the thing to do and now is the time to do it.

There is no question about it, there is growing support across the country for Senate reform and for an elected Senate. Angus Reid Strategies released a poll just a couple months ago, in September. It doesn't have a regional breakdown, but I found the breakdown that they did carry out to be quite fascinating. I hope my friends to the left are listening to this. I'll just give you the one question on Senate reform: "As you may know, several proposals have been made over the past few years to reform the senate of Canada. Do you support or oppose each of these ideas?"

Now, allowing Canadians to directly elect their senators—this was broken down on a party basis. I thought the interesting elements of this were that among Liberals there was 62% support, and the even more surprising number here was the NDP; 74% of NDP respondents supported direct election of senators. So I am hopeful that my friends to the left, when they're speaking later during the debate, will keep those poll numbers in mind and not the sort of traditionally dogmatic approach they take to Senate reform.

This is an important issue, and three provinces to date have already taken steps to address this issue. As we know, Alberta, with Bert Brown as the only elected senator in Canada, passed legislation. My legislation, Bill 67, that we're discussing here today, essentially mirrors the Alberta legislation. There's very little difference in terms of the writing of the bill. I have not seen the Saskatchewan legislation. It was passed. I gather it's quite similar, if not identical, to the Alberta legislation.

The province of Manitoba, under NDP Premier Gary Doer, has also passed enabling legislation, but has yet to determine how and when those elections should occur. But I understand there are public consultations occurring this fall which will lead to a decision by the Manitoba Legislature in terms of how that process will evolve.

Mr. Howard Hampton: That's Senator Ed Schreyer.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: That may be the answer.

We are talking about constitutional change, and of course, that's why we have moved in this direction, and Bert Brown has moved in this direction, and a number of provinces have already, rather than looking at constitu-

tional change because of the challenges we faced in the past with the Meech Lake accord and Charlottetown accord. But the important elements of those accords, those discussions across the country, all dealt with the issue of Senate reform because of its importance to so many Canadians.

1340

The Charlottetown accord had an option for the direct election of senators provincially or legislative appointment. Reading commentators' responses to that, they felt the inclusion of the legislative appointment option was really to get Quebec to sign on to the Charlottetown accord and that other provinces would in all likelihood move towards direct election.

Appointing people to a House of Parliament in one of the world's great democracies, Canada—when we have soldiers dying overseas, trying to support a budding democracy in Afghanistan—just boggles the mind. We have, in the current situation, a situation where people can be appointed at age 30 and serve until age 75. That's 45 years without any accountability to the taxpayers or the voters or the hard-working people of this great country.

Hugh Segal, who is now an appointed senator but very much a strong proponent of an elected Senate, or at least making a decision with respect to the Senate, I believe has tabled legislation calling for a national referendum on this issue.

But one of the things Hugh said in the past was that the appointment of people as currently occurs makes the former Soviet Union look like a democratic state, and there's a lot of truth to that.

As I said, a growing number of Canadians, a growing number of Ontarians, share Hugh's view and my view that elected status is the prerequisite for the legitimate exercise of influence.

Although the current Senate does do some good work—there's no question about that. I think Michael Kirby's work on mental health was a significant contribution in terms of that discussion across the country. Colin Kenny is a Liberal senator, but I am a fan of Senator Kenny and the good work he does with respect to security issues and challenges facing this country. There's no question that there are some good people serving in the Senate, regardless of political stripe. But the Senate as it is currently structured is a far cry from what was contemplated by the Fathers of Confederation. It's not fulfilling its role as a forum where regional interests will get a fair hearing. It's a place that is essentially a repository for political appointees—some, as I mentioned earlier, for potentially as long as 45 years.

We need a Senate that is directly accountable to the people who elect them, not the Prime Minister and not the Leader of the Opposition. This has been discussed over many years. The Macdonald commission—going back, doing some research on this, in 1985; this is Donald Macdonald, a very prominent member of the federal Liberal Party, and Thumper, I think, was Don Macdonald's name—dealt with that issue and also recommended Senate elections.

The most recent work on this, the Beaudoin-Dobbie committee, took a very in-depth look at this. I think there were some 3,000 submissions to that committee across Canada, dealing with constitutional reform, and one element, of course, was the Senate and Senate reform. That committee made a very clear recommendation with respect to recommending an elected Senate that would represent regional, gender and social diversity in its makeup.

Now, we can go through a number of federal agencies, organizations and commissions that have dealt with these issues over the past number of years, including of course Meech and Charlottetown.

I don't want to overstate the significance of a private member's bill in the Ontario Legislature. If there is a positive vote here today, though, I think it could have a real impact on the nature of the debate across this country. We are, after all, the most populous province in this great country. I think it would send out a very strong and positive signal to Canadians, especially Canadians in western Canada, who tend to view central Canada, and especially Ontario, with some degree of suspicion with respect to their view of national interests and concerns. They have felt left out, and I think that, initially anyway, the idea of Senate reform has been driven by that feeling of isolation and being left out in western Canada.

You can look at the representation in the current Senate and understand some of those concerns. Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, for example, have 10 members in the Senate, while Alberta and British Columbia qualify for six under the current constitution. So you can understand that.

Of course, if you look at the national energy program that was brought in by the Trudeau government, again the west—especially Alberta and Saskatchewan, but I think it was felt across the west—felt they did not have a voice and that there was no one representing regional interests in the Parliament of Canada, and certainly not in the Senate of Canada. This is a small step to dispel that view, that sense of suspicion.

I've spoken with Premier McGuinty about this issue on a couple of occasions. He assured me that this is a free vote today. I don't know if he made comment in caucus on Tuesday, but if he did in a negative way, I think that would colour the whole concept of a free vote, and I hope that wasn't the case.

He indicated to me that he was still pondering the issue, which made me feel somewhat optimistic, given the fact that he has been a supporter of abolition in the past. Given the, I think, growing sense among Ontarians as well that it's time for an elected Senate in Canada, I'm going to be optimistic that members on the government benches are going to be supportive of this bill today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's good to have an opportunity to speak to this particular issue. I have to say from the outset that I have some sympathy for the argument the member from Leeds-Grenville makes, and I will

speak to that in a couple of minutes. But I want to express my feelings about this issue clearly.

I have spoken on this in the past from time to time—we don't get too many opportunities to speak about these wonderful issues and to speak about Senators in general. I've got to tell you that I'm opposed to the whole idea of the Senate, and particularly offended by the idea of nominating Senators by whoever is in power at the moment. What you've had traditionally are Liberal governments that get elected more than Conservative governments, and what we have had, on the whole, for a long, long time is Liberal Prime Ministers appointing friends, people they were obliged to give an appointment to—

Mr. Howard Hampton: Bagmen.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some were bagmen, to be sure, and some worked tirelessly for the party and had to be nominated to something. They need to give away some spots, some positions that appear to have some relevance or some importance, so why not appoint them to the Senate? This is what successive Liberal Prime Ministers have done, over and over again.

Harper is now in power, and he's doing the same thing, God bless him. Why wouldn't he? Of course, he was opposed to it in the past, but now that he has an opportunity to appoint people, why not? Of course you're going to do the same thing that other Liberal Prime Ministers have done.

I've got to tell you it's an abominable way to put people in a position of responsibility; it really is. It offends me, and it offends a whole lot of people. It's at the whim of the Prime Minister of the day. It's wrong.

I've got to tell you they are well paid; I dare not say the amount, because I don't want to offend them or the public, but they do make more than we do. I think we work hard, and I suspect some Senators work hard too. I respect some of the Senators who are there, but I tell you they have a budget of close to \$100 million. It's a big budget: \$23 million or \$25 million or so directly connected to their office, and \$57 million or \$60 million connected to indirect work that they do as senators. It's a whole lot of money.

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I want to tell those who are watching that they only sit for 44 days in the year. That's not many sitting days. So you say to yourself, "Okay, they don't sit too long in the Senate. They're well-paid. We don't know what they do." The majority of people in Ontario do not know what senators do. Many senators absent themselves from the Senate because presumably they have a lot of hard work to do in other places, other than the Senate. The absenteeism rate for some members is quite high, in some cases 66%. It's shameful to even talk about. I don't know how they defend themselves. I dare not mention names, because it's not nice to mention names; it really isn't.

Interjection: That sounds like the member from Vaughan.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But you'll have an opportunity. You can mention names. I don't want to hurt anybody, really, in the process, other than stating some

figures: a whole big budget, 44 sitting days, good-paying jobs, and some of them absent themselves. So you say, what do they do? What do they do? If anyone here in this House can tell me with credibility what it is that they will do, I am happy to listen to you. But if you ask any Ontarians what senators do, they won't be able to tell you, because in my view—I don't know—they don't do much. They have no powers whatsoever except to delay bills for six months. That's the only power they've got. I suspect that from time to time they threaten to do that with one bill or another, but usually they back down. But if they put the government to the wall, assuming they have the numbers and assuming that those who are Liberal senators want to fight the government on some issue, assuming they do that and hold it up for six months, that's fine. It simply goes back and gets reintroduced, and pressure is put on senators to do the bidding of Parliament.

So the power is to delay for six months; that's it. It's not a bad-paying gig for having that power that you may use in your lifetime, because as you know, you can stay up to the age of 75 years—not bad. By the way, I'm not opposed to it because there are no New Democrats; really, that's not the issue. I don't believe that's the issue.

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's conceivable. It's conceivable that if Liberals appointed New Democrats, some might change their mind. You could be right; I don't know. But it is interesting that there are no New Democrats that I'm aware of. Somebody said there is one. I don't know who that is. But it is possible that Liberals could at some point be generous, and Harper, if he stays in power for a little longer, might be generous and decide it's not right just to appoint Tories: "We're going to appoint a New Democrat every now and there." He might do that; it's possible, so I should be a little flexible in my approach to the issue, because you never know. And then if we turn that into a three-party Senate, it might work out differently; you don't know.

My point is that they don't do anything of relevance for the 44 days they sit, for a well-paying job to be there up until you are 75 years of age. Not a bad gig, I say. But if you are going to have a Senate, and I suspect Liberals and Tories love to have a Senate because you're not going to give your power away to nominate people to plum jobs—you're not going to give that away. I know that. You're not going to do it. If that is the case, and it's mostly Tories and Liberals who get into those federal positions, I prefer that they be elected. This is where I agree with the member from Leeds–Grenville: If you're going to have them, in spite of the arguments I have made that you shouldn't, then I prefer that they be elected rather than nominated.

There are some technical problems. There is a possibility in the motion here that they could either run when there's a federal election or in stand-alone elections. Member from Leeds–Grenville, imagine having separate elections. It's a big cost.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Or it could be municipal elections too.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right. But if you have independent elections—stand-alone—imagine the cost for senators.

Mr. Randy Hillier: Democracy's not cheap, Rosie.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, democracy's not cheap.

If those senators had legitimate power of some kind, if they could—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But merely running in the election doesn't give you power; I'm sorry. You're going to have to speak to this. I'm assuming you are; that's why you're here. Tell me, when you stand up to speak, my good friend, why it is that they should be there—not because an election gives them legitimacy, but that they should be there because they're actually doing something. If you could address that, that would be great.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay, good.

My point is, if you're going to have a stand-alone election, it's a serious cost—I'm sorry—for the work they do. I don't buy that. So if you're going to have an election, make sure it's at the same time as a municipal or a provincial or a federal election so we don't incur that many more costs, please. That's first.

Second, as a technicality, if you're going to have an election—let's say we agree. We understand—and the member from Leeds–Grenville knows this—the federal government doesn't have to listen to you. So here you run an election, as they did in Alberta three times, to prove a point, of course, as a way of saying, "Elections are better than nominations." If you want to prove the point, you can. Eventually, if you have one party or the other getting back in, they might say, "Okay, we'll nominate Mr. Brown because we're in power now"—and by the way, we can do it because he just got elected. What a way of giving credibility to Mr. Brown, right? I understand that. The point is, a federal government doesn't have to listen to anybody vis-à-vis elections. But I understand the notion, the principle, of having them elected. That I agree with.

Here's my point, to wrap up, because there are only two minutes: We should abolish the Senate. That's my priority, really. Think about it, Conservative members. Spend a moment or two to talk about that. If we can't abolish the Senate because of entrenched Liberal and Conservative interests, then all right, let's have an election. Having an election, even nominally, philosophically, will send a point to the federal government that it's not a bad idea—and if so, let's have this election, because it's democratically preferable.

Third, if we're going to have to do this in spite of my objections to the Senate, please, it can't be stand-alone elections. Let's not incur those kinds of costs. Canadians cannot afford it.

My humble view, Bob, the member from Leeds–Grenville, is that the majority of people would love to abolish the Senate. That is my view. I agree that if you asked them if they would prefer to have them elected or not, they would say, "Yes, elected, of course." But if you

asked them the question, "Do you think we need a Senate?" the majority of Canadians are going to say, "No. We can't afford them." And I would agree with them.

I'm torn, member from Leeds–Grenville, because you see, in theory, I support your motion, but in practicality and in terms of principles, I really oppose it, because I want to abolish the Senate. Maybe in your remarks you can help me out and persuade me to support your motion.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I'll do my best.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I just remind honourable members to please speak through the Chair.

Further debate? The honourable member from Mississauga–Streetsville.

Mr. Bob Delaney: Perhaps I can assist my colleague from Trinity–Spadina in focusing some of his thinking, because I'm pleased to stand and comment on the private member's bill that has been presented by the member from Leeds–Grenville.

I've read the bill. The member suggests a short title of the Senators' Selection Act. As drafted, the bill lays out a procedure to elect candidates for appointment to the Senate of Canada. As a suggested procedure, Bill 67 has some internal consistency, and as the member said, a lot of it has been lifted from Alberta. It brings to mind for me the difference between doing things right and doing the right thing.

The premise of Bill 67 is that there should be an election for Senate candidates—and indeed, that there should even be a Senate of Canada. The more fundamental question, the question whether we are doing the right thing rather than merely doing things right, is not how the Senate of Canada should fill its seats, but whether we need or in fact even want a Senate of Canada at all.

1400

Now, the member for Leeds–Grenville supports the standard party slogan of a triple-E Senate, an expression that means "equal, elected and effective." Like most Canadians, I do differ on the mission statement of the Senate of Canada. I favour the abolition of the Senate altogether. The member's party likes to rail against the government—and I'm in the government—and yet, in the very next breath, aims to expand a body that offers no benefit to Canadians, contributes virtually nothing to the government of Canada and costs Canadians nearly \$80 million each year.

Our research into Bill 67 has shown that only four bills have ever actually been defeated in the Senate in all the decades of its existence. The Senate has shown, on matters like free trade and the GST, that it cannot prevent the will of Parliament from becoming law anyway. Now, some people say that the Senate's lack of effectiveness stems from its lack of legitimacy. It is an appointed body. It's a place for federal political parties, especially the governing party, to reward its veterans with a long-term sinecure that isn't terribly demanding and allows the

office holder lots of time to do other things such as political organizing.

Now, electing Canadian senators implies that there will be a significant role in government for those elected representatives. But Ontarians really don't see such a role or even a need for yet another layer of government. Ontarians would rightly question why we, as Canadians, would want to further empower an already ineffective body to form a duplicate level of government, to make it twice as cumbersome for laws to pass at the federal level as it is now. We need only look at the United States, where its Senate and its House of Representatives are in fact the motherlode for corporate lobbying.

In the US, a system that Bill 67 aims to more or less replicate or walk a parallel path to here in Canada, getting the work of the people done involves the kind of trade-offs and deals that the member's own party decries whenever they perceive it here in Canada. So why would this member or his party wish to impose upon us the expensive attributes of a government that spends most of its time in the gridlock of political wrangling instead of actually governing?

The cost of an elected Senate is estimated to be something like quadruple its current \$80-million-per-year price tag. With a federal government facing a structural deficit probably in excess of \$65 billion—the largest in history—one would think that the first priority for Canadians would be to deliver government that is simpler, leaner and less expensive. One way to do this is to abolish the Senate of Canada.

Canadians want strong majority governments. Canadians will give their governments both the mandate to govern them and to act decisively and also, and this is important, the legislative ability to enact laws on their behalf without fettering their federal Parliaments or provincial Legislatures with checks and balances that effectively grind the legislative process to a gridlocked political halt. Although this is absolutely not the intent of this member's bill, it is surely the outcome. If a government, once having received a mandate from the people of Canada or the people of a province, doesn't deliver the results that people reasonably expect of them in the circumstances, Canadians always have and will continue to have the power and, through their ballots, the ability to toss out the government and to give another party the mandate. We do this already. We do not need an elected Senate to do it better, and the lack of redundant elected bodies, like the Senate of Canada at the provincial level, gives voters in the provinces the obligation as well as the ability to pay attention and to think before voting.

Canadians have shown over and over again that although a vote is a crude and blunt instrument, Canadians can do sophisticated things with it when their decision, through our collective consciousness as a nation, is reflected in Parliament. So why do we need yet another elected body to second-guess Canadians, who have a long track record of solid good sense when we mark our ballots?

Ontario used to have an upper House. It was abolished in 1867, and no one has ever missed it. Quebec once had a Senate; it was abolished in 1968. In all of the seven provinces that once had upper Houses similar to the Canadian Senate, all of them have abolished them.

We know it can be done. Canadians can do away with a superfluous government institution. It would take the unanimous consent of the provinces to abolish the Senate of Canada. Ontarians think there is no better time than the present to abolish the Senate right now, and we actually thank the member for Leeds–Grenville for the opportunity to make this point in the Legislature.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Randy Hillier: It's my pleasure to speak to the member from Leeds–Grenville's private member's bill. I think it's an absolutely important bill to speak to, and it's so nice to see a debate in this House on something of significance and importance, instead of what we often get around to debating in government bills. As the member from Leeds–Grenville said, we hope that this is in the tradition of our parliamentary system, that a private member's bill will be a free vote.

I first want to say to the member from Mississauga–Streetsville that we ought not to confuse political representation with the size of government, as he just did. There are many jurisdictions throughout the world that have bicameral systems and have significant political representation but a smaller bureaucracy.

I'll give you the example of New Hampshire. That small state of 1.2 million people has 430 state assemblymen. They also have a bicameral upper House of 24 senators. It is probably one of the most frugal and well-run states in the United States, but it is the state that has the largest political representation and the smallest bureaucracy.

I also want to refer to the member from Trinity–Spadina and, I believe, a couple of factual errors. He said that the only thing the Senate can do is delay bills. Well, that's not quite true. They can offer up amendments to bills initiated in the House of Commons. They can also advance their own Senate bills. Where they're restricted to or from is on bills of supply and taxation. Rightly, that belongs with a House that is elected by people.

The whole concept of the Westminster system is a bicameral system, and it provides for that election by popular vote. That upper House is also there to provide some balance and some representation for regional diversity. That is the concept: representation by geography, as well as representation by population. It's shown around the world that it can be effective. In Australia, they moved to an elected upper House, and it has been successful with that upper House being elected.

There are problems with our system. They've been identified for a long time. There have actually been six different reports. The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned the Macdonald commission and also the Beaudoin–Dobbie report, but there's also been the Canada West Foundation, the Molgat–Cosgrove report,

the Alberta select committee, and of course, the Charlottetown proposal. All of these proposals went with the idea that an elected Senate is indeed the way to go.

Clearly, all members in this House can understand that where we derive our authority and legitimacy from is from our election. If we were appointed, we would not have any real authority or legitimacy.

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In the Macdonald report, they went on to say, "The Senate is part of Parliament, and Parliament is pre-eminently a representative body. For that reason ... we join those who have argued that the Senate should be an elected body."

The Beaudoin–Dobbie report in 1992 said, "If we wish to establish a strong and effective institution to ensure the responsiveness of the central government to regional needs," and that's key, "that institution needs to have the legitimacy which comes from having been chosen directly by the people."

I think we can all understand that those are undeniable maxims. We understand them to be self-evident. For representatives to have authority, they must be elected.

Unlike the members from Mississauga–Streetsville and Trinity–Spadina, who believe we should abolish the Senate, I believe that the Senate can and will have value if we make it legitimate. It will provide a check and balance on majority governments, elected oftentimes without representation from across this country. We have seen in the past where governments are strongly dominated by urban centres, and the people who do not live in those urban centres are disadvantaged. That's what the upper House is there to do: provide to those people who don't live in those dense urban centres a voice and effective representation.

We can see it here in our own province. When I travel the north, the feeling of alienation of the people in northern Ontario is tremendous. They don't believe that Toronto is representing them, and I would have to agree with them. They are not being well served under our present structure here.

Any government can have a majority with members representing only southern Ontario, and that's what we often have right now. We then have laws that come out and pander to that base, forgetting the other people in this province, the people of rural and northern Ontario.

I agree that the federal Senate has not been effective. I also believe that the reason it has not been effective is that with appointments, it is not legitimate.

We have seen the case in Australia, where their Senate now is a strong check and balance and an effective representation by region and population. We can do that here as well.

I believe that every member here has come to Queen's Park because they want to make our province and our country a better place. Now, we can stand around and debate pit bull bans or light bulb bans, but here we have an opportunity to make a difference. We have an opportunity to help make a change that will better our

country. These opportunities don't come up every day. These are opportunities that we should take advantage of.

The member's bill provides for significant latitude for elections corresponding with municipal, provincial or federal elections. It provides the latitude that we do not have to get into a constitutional debate to begin to do the right things. We can make these changes without that onerous constitutional amending formula. That's why Alberta went this way; it's why Saskatchewan and Manitoba have gone that way. They recognize that their people were not being well served by an illegitimate appointed Senate. They want to make it better.

I believe the people of Ontario want to see a better form of federal government as well. And again, when you talk to the people in rural and northern Ontario, they don't have the representation that the people in Mississauga–Streetsville or Trinity–Spadina might have. They are disadvantaged. We should be doing things to bring and to ensure that everybody in this province, and everybody in this country, feels that they have a voice.

I think it's also important that we recognize that it does have that check and balance on a majority government. We've seen here in this House what happens when you have a majority government. It can ram through things that are providing or causing a burden for others. A second voice, a second House, tempers that strong bull-headedness, sometimes, of majority governments.

As I said, to the member from Trinity–Spadina, the House can and does create Senate bills. It is not just a delay mechanism; it can advance its own bills. It can make amendments and it also can provide and does sometimes provide good committee work, travelling across the country. We can make our democracy better or we can choose to accept the status quo or we can hope that the inevitable or the impossible will never come.

The member from Mississauga–Streetsville says he wants to abolish it. You need to have full consent. He wants to have his whole perfect loaf and won't accept an improvement on the system that we have today. Let's improve what we have. Let's make it better. I believe that that second House is an important aspect of our Westminster parliamentary system and that indeed our system cannot fully represent the people of this country unless there is that second House. Let's legitimize that House. Let's vote in favour of the member from Leeds–Grenville's bill. It's an important first step.

I do hope and trust that each member in this House will vote by their conscience and that they have not been whipped, and recognize that our own authority here is what we're looking to ensure happens in the federal Senate—an election of representatives.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: I'm pleased to enter the debate on Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada, which was introduced for debate, for second reading, by the member from Leeds–Grenville. I listened to him and read the bill many different times. But I still don't know

what we can achieve if we pass this bill or if we don't pass it. It doesn't mean anything.

As the member from Trinity–Spadina mentioned, we have no role. We have no role besides just opening the debate around this issue because it's an important issue, yes, to talk about democracy, to talk about elections and to talk about representation, whether provincially, municipally, federally or in the Senate. If we pass it, or if we don't pass it, it's not going to make any difference because the federal government won't listen to us because it's out of our jurisdiction.

We've been talking about the role of the Senate for many different years. What do they do in Canada? They have different roles. They have some kind of decided matter—to my knowledge, I guess the federal government decides on behalf of all the people of Canada, the many different jurisdictions, and has the ultimate role and the positions and the power to do whatever, in this nation.

Therefore, I think the Senate at the present time exists to please certain power-makers, whether from this community, from gender, from this region or other regions. Besides that, I don't see any role for the Senate in Canada. That's why our Premier, Dalton McGuinty, on many different occasions asked to abolish the Senate, and the Premier of Manitoba also asked to abolish the Senate, as did Saskatchewan and many other provinces, because the Senate does not play a role and does not reflect the power which already exists in Canada.

Therefore, I think to abolish the Senate is a good thing to do, as my colleague, the member from Mississauga West mentioned many different times. I want to thank him for giving me all of the information about the Senate system in Canada and all these issues which exist around this issue. He said it would cost \$80 million on a yearly basis for nothing, all to please certain people.

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The member from Leeds–Grenville mentioned a few minutes ago that people could be elected at age 30 and serve all the way to age 75, with no accountability. They don't have to do anything; they don't have to ask constituents to elect them or not. They are just appointed because they're friends with the Prime Minister or the powers that be, whether Liberal, Conservative, NDP or Bloc Québécois.

The Senate, at the present time, is a House to please certain powers in this nation. Therefore, I think that abolishing the Senate would be a very important step to strengthen the power of the provinces and also the federal government. I don't see any role for the Senate at the present time, even though the member from Leeds–Grenville is asking for nominations for a Senate from the province of Ontario. We can go through this exercise—it will cost a tremendous amount of money for no reason—and then the people nominated for the Senate by the province of Ontario would not necessarily be selected by the federal government to serve as senators, because we have no power.

We can't exercise whatever we want. This has to be a national issue. It has to be debated in the federal govern-

ment and has to be debated nationally, and a decision taken as to whether we want to keep the Senate and give them more of a role in Canada. Then we have to reconstruct the whole thing and also establish the election system, give the senators some kind of power and give them some reason to be there, and also a legitimate reason to be elected by the people of Canada, and not be appointed by certain powers in the federal government.

I add my voice to my colleague's from Mississauga West and the member from Trinity-Spadina. I think a good thing is to abolish the Senate and save the money to pay our debt or invest it in different issues like health care, education or infrastructure, instead of wasting our time debating an issue we have no power or jurisdiction over. I think it best that this be debated by the federal government and voted on nationally as to whether or not the Senate should exist.

If we decide nationally that we have to keep the Senate, we have to give them a role and they have to be elected by the people of Canada, not appointed by certain powers in Ottawa. I think that whether I vote for or against it, it's not going to make a difference in terms of persuading the federal government to listen to us.

Thank you for allowing me to stand and speak, Mr. Speaker, and I wish the member from Leeds-Grenville good luck and success persuading his friends in Ottawa to change the rules of the Senate system. As all of us know, when the Prime Minister of Canada was running for election, he promised the people of Canada an elected Senate, but what happened? He appointed more senators than anybody else in the past.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member for Leeds-Grenville, Mr. Runciman, you have two minutes for your response.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I could use a lot more than two minutes. I want to initially respond to the member from Trinity-Spadina, I appreciated his contribution, and I understand his position with respect to abolition. It's a long-standing position of his party and, I think, his personally. It relates to comments we've heard from the Liberal members as well.

I think we all recognize that abolition is not going to occur. It requires significant constitutional change: seven provinces out of 10, representing over 50% of the population. That's the kind of requirement before abolition could actually occur. Maybe a national referendum would result in that kind of initiative, but I don't think it's going to happen.

You talked about how—I think I'm quoting you, Rosie—they don't have any powers. But in effect, they do. Constitutionally, they have nearly the same powers as the House of Commons, except that they cannot initiate appropriation and tax bills. They're rarely utilized—I'll give you that—but I think the reason they're rarely utilized is because the chamber lacks political legitimacy.

To the member from London-Fanshawe, that was a bewildering contribution. He's saying that we, the most populous province in Canada, have no role. Three provinces have already passed legislation on this issue.

The Premier of British Columbia recently said that he would support it as long as the federal government picked up the costs associated with it. So to say the most populous province in Canada has no role, this assembly has no role, is really a disservice to this place and the importance that a motion, a vote, from this assembly can have on this national debate. That's just bewildering. What is most disappointing is that obviously this is a whipped vote; there's nothing free about this vote today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will vote on Mr. Runciman's ballot item in about 100 minutes.

MISSING PERSONS ALERT

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I move that, in the opinion of this House, the government of Ontario should establish a province-wide notification system, known as the Silver Alert, to alert the public of a missing person who suffers from Alzheimer's disease or other form of dementia.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Aggelonitis moves private members' notice of motion number 117. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member has up to 12 minutes for her presentation.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: First, I'd like to recognize all the people from the Alzheimer's Society who are here with us today in the gallery. Thank you for being here.

I start with a question: Who hasn't been touched by someone who has Alzheimer's? I believe that we all have been touched by someone, whether it's a family member or a friend who has a family member or a friend. Alzheimer's is a brain disease. It is incurable; it is degenerative; and it is terminal.

Today in Canada, there are 500,000 people living with Alzheimer's disease or a related form of dementia. Within the next 25 years, this number will rise dramatically. It is estimated that Canada will have almost 1.3 million people living with this disease. In Ontario today, we have well over 180,000 people living with Alzheimer's or another form of dementia. By 2015, in just six more years, seniors, who represent those 65 years of age and older, will exceed the number of children 15 years of age or younger for the first time in Canadian history. It is anticipated that by 2031 seniors will make up approximately 25% of the Canadian population.

The reason for my resolution today is personal. It's personal, but it's also a conversation that I've had with many of my constituents on Hamilton Mountain who have family members who have Alzheimer's. Some of those family members wander. When I talk about wandering—wandering is a typical behaviour for an Alzheimer's patient or someone who is suffering from a form of dementia. They will wander. Statistics show that 60% of all Alzheimer's patients will wander at one time or another during this disease.

The story that I'd like to share is about my grandmother Sophia. My grandmother Sophia and my grandfather Lemberis lived in a small village in Greece. They were farmers. They lived off the land; they had olive trees, fruits and vegetables. When my grandfather

passed away, my grandmother moved to Canada to be with her two daughters and her three grandchildren. I was very lucky to spend a lot of time with my grandmother, and those are days that I will never forget. On one occasion, it was late evening after a late supper, my grandmother, who had Alzheimer's, wandered. She left the house, and we panicked. Everyone panicked. We called the police; we called all our friends. We were really lucky to find her, many hours later, in a wooded area behind a school blocks away. I remember talking to my grandmother after the fact. I said, "Grandma, where were you going?" She said, "I just wanted to check up on those olive trees." She just wandered away.

Another story is from just a few weeks ago in Hamilton. An 86-year-old man who suffers from dementia went for a walk. He was found 24 hours later. The police said, "He ended up on the other side of the city." They said that the temperature that night dropped below freezing and he was not dressed for the weather. Thank goodness they did find him.

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These are just two good stories, but they don't always turn out that way. I believe that we must have the foresight to address these issues that put our Alzheimer's sufferers at risk. This means taking action and implementing effective policies that will safeguard the lives of people with Alzheimer's or dementia.

I did mention wandering. Wandering is one of the symptoms of Alzheimer's that can be fatal. Wandering isn't necessarily dangerous, but when you combine it with short-term memory loss and the inability to make rational judgments, that's when it could be fatal.

If they are not found within 24 hours, nearly 50% risk serious injury or death. This can occur because of extended exposure to the elements or because of the lack of food or hydration.

Currently there are some very good notification systems in our province. There is a system from the Alzheimer Society of Canada, a system that was developed for a nationwide program which is called the Safely Home registry, which provides identification cards and bracelets. There are also locating devices. I know that McMaster University is also working on this.

The good news here is that the Silver Alert program that I'm suggesting would be a very good example that could be partnered with already existing programs, much like they've done in the United States, with some very successful results. The Silver Alert program in the US: Right now there are 32 jurisdictions that either have a program operating or the program is pending before legislation.

This resolution is about creating a notification system, the Silver Alert. This program is modelled after the Amber Alert. By using similar infrastructure, it has the capacity to find our missing Alzheimer's patients.

Like Amber Alert, Silver Alert will contact media outlets and may activate an emergency alert system when an adult is reported missing. In doing so, it will alert not only the law enforcement agencies but the public as well,

who will be encouraged to aid in the recovery of the missing person.

However, it is very important to note that this should not be mistaken for weakening the Amber Alert or desensitizing the public. While this was a primary concern in several jurisdictions in the US, it has since been reported that the concern did not translate into reality.

Various strategies have been undertaken to prevent public desensitization and the weakening of the Amber Alert, such as activating the alerts regionally and outlining specific criteria to be met before issuing an alert. In any case, this resolution has been generally defined for the purpose of allowing discussion pertaining to the specific guidelines of the Silver Alert.

US jurisdictions vary widely on several matters, such as the target population and the criteria for issuing an alert as well as its method of dissemination. This means there is plenty of flexibility in regard to system parameters. Nevertheless, the reported range of missing cases emphasizes the requirement for a Silver Alert in our province.

For instance, in North Carolina, there were 82 alerts activated between December 2007 and October 2008. Forty-three of those were on behalf of individuals who went driving and 39 who went wandering. Of the 39, three had taken a plane to another state, two were last seen on a bike, one took a bus to another state and one took a taxi. These incidents show how difficult it could be to locate missing adults without the coordinated effort of a Silver Alert.

Another example in Georgia: Between July 2006 and January 2009, the alert contributed to the recovery of 79 individuals, and 78 were found alive.

In Texas, 77 alerts were activated; 21 contributed to the recovery of wandering patients.

Although the outcomes vary, these numbers show promising signs of Silver Alert's achievement. This is a notification system that has not only proven successful in locating missing persons, but it also functions as a supportive structure that caregivers can count on.

The existence of a Silver Alert program reassures caregivers that although there is no promise or guarantee, the dissemination of alerts to the general public will certainly spread awareness about the missing person. This value is something that should not be underestimated.

The concern regarding system costs also should not diminish this value. In fact, we found that states like Rhode Island, Ohio and Oklahoma have reported little or no additional costs. They found that the implementation costs of a Silver Alert are frequently absorbed by the Amber Alert budget because the infrastructure already exists.

Overall, these reports indicate that fairly little harm would arise from allowing Silver Alert to take shape in our province. The formation of the Silver Alert here would allow for greater swiftness in locating missing adults and would decrease the chances of serious injury, illness or death. It would also function as a system for caregivers who fear for the safety of their loved ones.

For these reasons and for many more, it is truly necessary that we take this step on behalf of all Alzheimer's sufferers throughout this province. Again, I ask the question: Who hasn't been touched by Alzheimer's?

I would like to end with a thank you to the people who have helped me get this resolution prepared. Some of those people are here with us today: Donna Cripps from St. Peter's Hospital in Hamilton; Mary Burnett, the CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Hamilton; David Harvey, the interim CEO of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; Kathy Dewling, the president of the board of directors of the Alzheimer Society of Ontario; Mary Schulz from the Alzheimer Society of Canada; Brian Mullan, the chief of police of Hamilton; and as well, people in my office, Fil D'Amico, Michael Coe and Sylvia Guirguis.

I hope I can count on the support of my colleagues.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Christine Elliott: I am pleased to rise this afternoon to make a few comments with respect to this private member's resolution. I won't be using the entire time; my colleague the member from Newmarket-Aurora also wishes to speak to this. But I would like to say at the outset that I do intend to support the member's resolution, and also to commend the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing this very important matter to the Legislature. It certainly is worthy of consideration. It is an important concern to many individuals and families. Thank you also for sharing your personal story with us.

This is a system that has already been incorporated in some measure, as the member indicated, in other jurisdictions in the United States. It certainly is something that we should be considering, especially since we have the infrastructure here with the Amber Alert. We can use that platform to build a similar system here in Ontario.

I do thank, as well, the members from the Alzheimer Society who are here, and from any other organizations that are here that contributed to this work, which can be done, I would think, quite cost-effectively and easily, given the existing infrastructure.

The facts and figures relating to Alzheimer's in Ontario are actually pretty startling. Right now, today, there are half a million people in Ontario who are living with Alzheimer's; 25 years from now, it's expected that this number is going to balloon to 1.3 million. So this is a matter of significant concern.

Alzheimer's, as we know, is a disease of the brain. It affects memory and the ability to think clearly and results in people being unable to perform tasks of daily living that they have performed for most of their lives and that have been almost automatic for many years. It also means that often people can become disoriented in terms of time and place, and results in changes in behaviour. This could lead people to leaving home, becoming confused, getting lost and wandering away, as the member mentioned. So there's no question that we do have a significant need for some kind of an alert system to be able to bring people safely home.

I do have an example myself, actually, that I can share that I myself witnessed a number of years ago when I

was waiting in a car in a hospital parking lot—it was the Toronto Hospital, actually—for a friend to come out. I noticed, as I was sitting there, an elderly lady come out of the hospital in just pyjamas and slippers. It was quite cool out. She walked across the parking lot and walked off the hospital property, went to the first set of crossing lights and just walked off into a nearby subdivision. Although this probably wasn't the best response for me to have taken, but because I was afraid that I would lose her, I followed her in my car. I thought, I'll just leave her to see if she knows where she's going. Quite clearly, she didn't, and I found her several blocks away standing in the middle of the street. She was quite upset; she was actually crying. I was able to persuade her to get into the car with me, and I took her back to the hospital. They were certainly quite relieved to have her back. Though it ended well, it could have ended quite differently. So I am firmly convinced of the need for a registry of this nature and I would strongly support it.

1440

I have had a chance to take a look at the program called Safely Home that has been developed by the Alzheimer Society in conjunction with the RCMP, and it looks like a wonderful registry that stores vital information safely in a confidential database, so that if somebody does get lost, they will have the information on a bracelet that can be tracked into the database and the person can be located fairly quickly. I'm not sure if that's exactly what's going to be used in this situation, should this resolution pass, as I certainly hope it will, but I think that is something that certainly could be used to build upon.

The only thing I would say—and this is certainly by no means a criticism; it's just a wish that we had been able to include other people with a cognitive impairment in this organization. There are many people, those people living with an intellectual disability who are also similarly vulnerable, who may have been included in this. I think perhaps that's something that, as the system gets under way, people may want to consider adding. Or maybe it'll even be the subject of another private member's resolution.

Having said that, I think it's a wonderful idea. It should be extended to all vulnerable people, as I hope it will be in the future. So I'm most pleased to support the member's resolution today.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? The honourable member for Trinity-Spadina.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I want to say that I will be supporting this motion. I also want to say that the member from Whitby-Oshawa raises good questions about what else could be attached to this kind of system, rather than having a different system attached to a different problem. I think we need to think more carefully about how we do that, because often we get these private members' bills and they deal with one specific issue, and we know there are so many. Those questions are useful and obviously can't be dealt with today, but it would be nice to have a better-coordinated system.

I'm speaking in support of this motion mostly because of the experience I had with Alzheimer's. In 1990, my father died of Alzheimer's disease. That was the year I got elected. He had Alzheimer's disease for about seven years. I have to admit, our family didn't know anything about Alzheimer's until my father experienced Alzheimer's disease. We knew initially that he had some memory lapses, and we didn't quite understand. We thought they were stress-related. He was very worried about money problems in the very beginning, and we thought, why is he so worried about this? I thought it was connected to some issue with some property we had in Italy, and I thought, if that's the case, we'd say, "Father, just forget about it. We don't need to worry about that." Little did I know it was dementia.

When we went to a good friend of mine whose name is Dr. Fornazzari, he diagnosed, close to the two-year range, the problem as dementia, which was of course Alzheimer's. But even until then, we knew nothing about the effects of Alzheimer's on the individual and the consequent effects on the family. Up until the two years there was some cognitive knowledge, but after the two years it was just over. He was alive but not with us for the remaining five years. It's a tribute to what families can do on their own.

I just wanted to praise my mother for the work that she did, because she took care of him for seven years. She was four foot 10; my father was a bit taller. She didn't want him in an institution, she didn't want him in long-term care; she wanted to take care of him. She wanted him at home.

We tried to get some respite care at Christie and Dupont. I was a school trustee at the time. I had a difficult time trying to persuade the institution that what my mother wanted was respite care so that she had a break. We did that, I think, for a year or so, but there was pressure from the institution to institutionalize him, and my mother didn't want him in the home. There was no respite care for individuals who, on their own, are taking care of family members without any societal support from the government or anywhere else, and the supports were not there.

We all took turns in the family, of course, to help my mother to get him out of bed, to clean him, but my mother did the mountain of work with respect to the care. She fed him regularly.

I have to tell you, if my mother didn't take care of my father, I don't think he would have survived long. People with Alzheimer's in institutions do not survive long simply because the care isn't there. And the care isn't there because the people who work in the system are overworked and terribly underpaid. There aren't enough of them to be able to worry about a human being who doesn't see them, cannot respond to them, cannot feel any pain—at least as far as we know. We didn't know whether he felt pain or not, but we knew, over the course of this disease, that he must have been suffering. But they can't communicate it to you. Yes he, like most others, wandered and had violent episodes where many of us had to control his violent episodes, but he wandered.

The reason why we never had a problem is because there was always somebody there. But that's not true in all cases. Not every family has the power, the strength, the resources to be able to deal with a family member who has got that disease. My mother was just different and special. I wish I had her strength, but we don't all have that kind of strength.

So where they do offer their supports, like the Alzheimer Society of Ontario and others—God bless them, because we need them. If they didn't exist, all of our families would, indeed, be on their own. I support the Alzheimer Society of Canada in terms of the program they developed, the Safely Home Registry, which the member from Whitby-Oshawa mentioned and Sophia mentioned.

It's a good idea, except that only 17,000 or so—16,000, close to 17,000—are registered. Sophia mentions there are half a million people with Alzheimer's disease, so what that means is that we have close to half a million not registered. And what it means, for those who are not in institutions but at home, is that they will wander. They will, inevitably they do. Most of the time there is some family member who can take care of it, and sometimes they don't. They do wander, and they are in danger. We know that.

To the extent that this province-wide notification program is helpful and it complements, it's a good idea. How it complements, based on the questions the member from Whitby-Oshawa asked, is the question. I don't know whether we've worked that out, whether you've thought about it or whether it's going to be worked out once we agree, pass it and, hopefully, institutionalize it. But it does raise questions.

Up until this point, what we are doing as a society, as governments and NGOs—nongovernmental agencies, non-profit agencies that do their best with their volunteer time donating thousands of hours, saving government so much money, we bless them for the work they do and for helping to manage the problem. But that's all we're doing: We're managing the problem. What we're not doing is focusing on what we can do to prevent it. In fairness, the Alzheimer Society of Ontario talks about prevention as a key element of the work that needs to be done, but we spend so little time and energy in that regard.

We know that there are risk factors attached to this disease as, indeed, there are risk factors connected to most of the chronic diseases. Some of them are high cholesterol levels, high blood pressure, type 2 diabetes—adult diabetes—strokes, depression, stress, lack of physical exercise, unhealthy eating habits, obesity, low levels of formal education and low socio-economic status.

1450

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: Unilingualism.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Are you speaking, Doctor? Are you going to be speaking? No, no, I'm just saying—I didn't mean to say that as if somehow it was a criticism. Don't get me wrong. I hope you do speak.

So these are some of the risk factors that we are aware of and they are intertwined with a number of chronic

diseases, and it is related to people's socio-economic environment; I agree. The good doctor talks about unilingualism as a problem, because if you don't speak another language or if you just speak one language and you're a senior citizen, it complicates it even more; I agree.

But we have to talk about the socio-economic factors because there are many people in society who face incredible stress levels. That is hurtful to the mind and to the body sociologically, psychologically and physiologically. Their level of income hurts if it's low. If you're low income, it's going to hurt you physiologically, physically, psychologically. The access to social supports or recreational opportunities—if they're lacking in those opportunities, it's going to put a lot of stress on those individuals.

We know this government is spending billions of dollars—\$42 billion, \$43 billion—on our health care system, but the chronic diseases are not going away. In fact, they're becoming more widespread and part of the reason is—at least this government, and in the past, I have to admit—we're treating and managing the disease rather than preventing it, or talking about how we prevent it. Liberals spend 1% of their budgets in trying to contain and manage rather than dealing with prevention. So we have to talk about that.

I've got to tell you that a lot of middle-class parents, who understand intellectually some of these areas and how we can prevent it, are actually working on it. But there is an intellectual ability to deal with it and there are economic resources that permit them to deal with it. Poor people don't have that luxury. Poor people only have the luxury of trying to survive. They don't have the luxury to try to prevent some of the problems they face, some of the problems of unemployment, some of the problems of economic insecurity, some of the problems of unhealthy environments. Unless you deal with that, this problem is not going to go away.

The only thing I can say to the member from Hamilton Mountain is, this is an easy step, or at least much easier, but unless we dedicate more time to prevent the problem, which is what we talk about here as New Democrats on a regular basis—we have to spend more time and attention on how we prevent rather than spending billions of dollars on treating and managing a chronic illness. Until we do that, we're going to be spending billions of dollars that we do not have rather than learning how to prevent, and we can prevent it and we should devote ourselves to that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Khalil Ramal: First, I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for bringing such an important issue to debate in this House concerning mental health issues faced by almost 180,000 Ontarians. I appreciate her personal story and how she shared it with all of us in this place and also probably many Ontarians who are listening to us today.

It's such an important issue. I was talking to my friend, the doctor on my left side here, and he was telling

me very important things about this disease. When you have many different languages, it will help delay that disease from attacking the person. But the funny part is, when the disease controls you, you lose all the languages you learn and you go back to your native tongue, which I think sometimes makes it difficult for many people who come from different nations to express their feelings and their needs. They go to institutions and not many people are able to understand them or what they want.

That's why I think it's important to talk about this issue and deal with it. I want to thank the member from Hamilton Mountain for proposing a solution, a Silver Alert added to the Amber Alert, to help deal with this issue.

One of the symptoms of this disease is that people wander around and go everywhere, especially in the wintertime. They might get caught in the ditches or somewhere, they get cold, and they die. I think it is our responsibility as citizens to look after those people who are considered vulnerable and our responsibility to care for them and give them the chance to live with respect and dignity and provide them the service they need and they deserve.

I believe every one of us in this place, every one of us in the whole nation, is touched by or has someone who has faced those diseases and suffered from them many different times for many years, and they don't find a solution. I listened to the member from Trinity-Spadina talk about his father and how much it caused him confusion because they couldn't find a service which alleviates some of the work for his mother and his family. Probably his father was privileged and blessed to have a family care for him. There are many others who don't have that extended family, who don't understand the connection to family and responsibility, so they let them go live on their own, and they suffer for many years without any attention, without any service, without any care.

I think if we have a provincial strategy, it would be important for all of us in the province of Ontario to make sure the vulnerable people who live among us get the support they need and the help they need.

I listened to the member from Whitby-Oshawa talking about many different suggestions. I think it is important. That is why we have a private member's bill and debate it in this place. Everyone brings an idea and other people are critical of the idea or respond or suggest more ideas. This enhances our ability to find a solution.

Before I finish, because many of my friends want to speak on this issue, I want to thank the member again for bringing to this House such an important issue to be debated. I wish you all the luck and success.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: First of all, I want to thank my colleague the member from Whitby-Oshawa for allowing me some time as well. I want to speak in very strong support for this resolution brought forward by the member from Hamilton Mountain. There are occasions in

this place when a member brings forward a resolution that certainly transcends any partisan issue and allows us to come together as members of this Legislature to deal with the issues that really matter in people's lives.

Again, I support this. The member from Hamilton Mountain rhetorically asked the question, "Who has not been touched by this?" As was the member from Trinity-Spadina's, my connection was a very personal one. In my case it was my mother, who up until my father passed on was a very strong and very healthy woman. But it wasn't long after my father passed on that we started to see the signs of dementia.

It didn't really hit me until an afternoon I will never forget. We had invited my mother to live with us while my sister was on a trip, and so she was spending four weeks with us. We saw various signs from time to time that something was not quite right. I'll never forget: I had just finished spending about an hour in discussion with my mother. My wife, Jaine, was there. Then I had to leave, and when I came back that evening, my wife said to me, "I have to tell you what your mother said when you left." I said, "What is that?" And she said, "Who was that man who we just had that conversation with?" That was a sense of reality for me that we were losing a certain part of my mother.

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I think what is so challenging about Alzheimer's is that on the surface people look very, very normal. What we don't know is what is really going on in their minds. So this initiative on the part of the member from Hamilton Mountain is just the civil thing to do. It's the right thing to do.

We have, as the member from Whitby-Oshawa indicated, the platform through the Amber Alert system in this province. Whatever the funding may be that's required to extend that to ensure that our vulnerable loved ones in this province have at least the basic protection of an alert to bring them back into a safe environment, it's our responsibility to do.

Every morning, I get a little memo from a dear friend who has made a habit of sending me an e-mail to my BlackBerry with a little saying. It was interesting this morning. Shirley Bray sent me this message, and it was the story of a man who met with his wife for breakfast every morning before he went off to work. This happened to be in a long-term-care home. Someone asked him, one day as he was leaving, "Would your wife be upset if you didn't come?" He responded by saying, "Actually, she hasn't recognized me in five years. She doesn't know who I am, but I know who she is."

I think it's because we know who they are that we have a responsibility to do what the member from Hamilton Mountain is asking us to do, and that's why we should all support this and, as the member from Trinity-Spadina said, not just support the resolution, but the government needs to put behind this resolution the resources for implementation. If that happens, we can say that this has been a good day in the Legislature of Ontario.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: With your indulgence, I just have the Ravindran family visiting from my riding: Shaki Ravindran, the mom; Anju Ravindran, who's 15 years of age today—it's her birthday; Taran Ravindran, who's at Crescent School; Evan Ravindran, who's at Allenby school; and Jena Ravindran, who's at Allenby school. Welcome to Queen's Park.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. It's not a point of order, but welcome to Queen's Park.

Further debate?

Mrs. Linda Jeffrey: I wish to speak in support of the resolution from the member from Hamilton Mountain that she's putting forward today.

Alzheimer's and related dementias are diseases of the brain. They erase our memories. They steal the ability to think and they make simple daily tasks, such as eating or getting dressed, impossible. They rob independence and eventually take lives.

Alzheimer's disease and related dementias affect men and women of all races, religions and socioeconomic backgrounds. It's not a normal part of aging, and no one is immune.

With the elderly making up the fastest-growing segment of the population, it's clear that more caregivers and more families will have to spend ever-increasing time and money in the coming years to keep tabs on older citizens with dementia.

Caregiving is a critical issue for people living with Alzheimer's disease or related dementia and for Canadians as a whole. According to the Canadian Caregiver Coalition, one in five Canadians 45 years and older provide some form of care to seniors who have long-term health care problems. Almost half of the caregivers in Canada are between 45 and 54, balancing this role with job and family responsibilities. A quarter of all informal caregivers are seniors themselves. Family caregivers are the invisible and hidden backbone of the health and long-term-care system.

Dementia results in more years lived with a disability than stroke, heart disease and all forms of cancer. Over 70% of those living in Ontario's long-term-care homes have Alzheimer's disease or related dementia.

One of the most troubling issues with the disease is the desire to exit-seek, and the burden of caring for individuals is made even more complex with the need to constantly guard against the potential escape of the afflicted individual.

When I became aware of this private member's bill, I asked the police chief from my municipality of Brampton if the Silver Alert was an issue that affected my community. I've been advised that in Brampton we use a program similar to Silver Alert to provide vital information to authorities to assist in the search and safe return of wandering individuals suffering from some form of dementia.

I support the initiative before us today. I feel that having a program to provide for the safe return of

vulnerable individuals is a valuable tool for every community.

The Peel Regional Police have advised me that they are supportive of any program that provides assistance in the search and safe recovery of those individuals suffering from some form of dementia.

I've come to understand that each community has its own unique way of handling the issue of missing adults. I can only think that if there were one such system that became the norm, much like the Amber Alert for children, the loss of an adult, a loved one who has wandered off, would be much better handled.

This resolution is a great first step, and I'm happy to support the member from Hamilton Mountain in her efforts to establish a province-wide notification system.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mrs. Amrit Mangat: I'm pleased to support the resolution put forward by my colleague from the riding of Hamilton Mountain.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common form of dementia in Canada, and it accounts for about 64% of all dementias in this country. It erases memory, steals the ability to think, and makes simple daily tasks, such as eating and getting dressed, almost impossible. It takes away a person's ability to be independent. Sadly, it eventually takes one's life. In Ontario, more than 180,000 people are living with the disease.

Alzheimer's disease is the most common dementia affecting elderly people. The Ontario government has made a significant investment in Ontario's strategy for Alzheimer's disease and related dementia. This is the first comprehensive, multi-faceted strategy on Alzheimer's disease to be introduced in Canada.

With all that we are doing, can we do more? Yes, we can always do more, and that is why I support this resolution. The resolution asks the government of Ontario to establish a province-wide notification system, known as the Silver Alert, to alert the public of a missing person who suffers from Alzheimer's disease or other forms of dementia.

One of the symptoms of Alzheimer's disease and other related dementias is the tendency to wander. Wandering is not a dangerous activity in itself, but short-term memory loss and impaired ability to reason or to make some judgments can contribute to unsafe wandering behaviour.

Sadly, though, when a loved one wanders, they can get lost and are unable to find their way back. This morning, the Mississauga News reported that Gur Dev Kaur Aujla, who has Alzheimer's disease, went missing for over eight hours. With the help of the police, she was found and returned to her family. If we had the Silver Alert system in place, perhaps the time it took to find her would have been much less. Thankfully, she was okay. That is why it is important for us to have a system to help find our loved ones sooner and before any harm can come to them.

The Silver Alert system is much like the Amber Alert system, which lets the public know a child is missing. A Silver Alert system would allow the public to know that a person is missing and they suffer from dementia and they need help to be brought back home. With the public alerted, loved ones such as Gur Dev Kaur Aujla can be found faster and reunited with their families faster.

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I want to commend my colleague for bringing this resolution to the House. Although the members from Whitby-Oshawa, Newmarket-Aurora, Trinity-Spadina, Brampton-Springdale and London-Fanshawe have supported it, I encourage all members of this House to support it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate? Seeing none, the honourable member for Hamilton Mountain, Ms. Aggelonitis, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Ms. Sophia Aggelonitis: I would like to thank the member from Oshawa-Whitby, who shared her story with us. Thank you so much. I also want to thank the member from Trinity-Spadina, who shared his story about his dad. I'm very sorry about the passing of his dad. To the speakers from Brampton-Springdale, Mississauga-Brampton South and London-Fanshawe, thank you very much. Lastly, I want to thank the member from Newmarket-Aurora for sharing your story, of course, but especially the last part, when you said that if this program was implemented it would be a good day in this House.

Today, all of my colleagues who spoke showed me why I wanted to come to this House. It's about working together and about bringing resolutions like this to the House so that it can be a good day in this House and make a difference.

Lastly, I just want to say that the member spoke just yesterday about someone going missing, and thank goodness we found her only eight hours later. The time for this program is now. The time for our government to work on implementing a strategy is now. I will be working on this continuously for as long as I'm here, to make sure we do implement a program like Silver Alert, because our Alzheimer's family members deserve nothing less. Thank you very much, everyone.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): For the people watching in the gallery and those watching at home, we will vote on this ballot item in about 50 minutes.

The member for Ajax-Pickering on a point of order.

Mr. Joe Dickson: With your permission and the permission of the next speaker, I'd like to take this opportunity to wish someone a very special day today. My former seat mate, Dr. Helena Jaczek, the member from Oak Ridges-Markham, is celebrating a very, very special birthday. She is so young looking that I'm not sure if it's her 39th birthday or not, but we all wish her well today from everyone here in the caucus.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's not a point of order, but happy birthday, Doctor.

Orders of the day.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

Mr. Howard Hampton: I move that, in the opinion of this House, children's aid societies in the province of Ontario, including the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River, must be provided with sufficient annual funding to allow them to provide the services necessary for the children and families they are required by law to serve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Hampton moves private members' notice of motion number 118. Pursuant to standing order 98, the honourable member, Mr. Hampton, you have up to 12 minutes for your presentation.

Mr. Howard Hampton: There has been a fair bit of commotion over the last couple of months about the funding of children's aid societies. I myself have asked a number of questions on the issue. I have received some answers from the minister, and the answers tend to be along this line: The minister believes that children's aid societies are squandering the public's money, and that children's aid societies in the province of Ontario are not financially responsible.

I have listened to those responses, and then I've done some research. It's interesting, if you look at the economic statement that was tabled by the government just a couple of weeks ago, because what the economic statement shows is that the cost of children's aid societies across Ontario since 2003 has increased only at the same rate that the provincial government's revenue has increased. This government has increased its revenue by 32% since 2003, and the costs incurred by children's aid societies have increased by 32%—in other words, a steady state.

Overall, this government's expenditures have increased by 54%. But what that tells you is, if the government is looking for a bad guy, somebody who has driven up government expenditures by 54%, it is not children's aid societies. Their expenditures are actually much less than that. Yes, the cost of children's aid societies has increased, but the cost increases come as a result not of things that the children's aid societies have done but as a result of two initiatives by the provincial government.

One of those initiatives was put in place by the former Conservative government in 1997 to 2000. It was called the Child Welfare Reform. Everyone understood, when that reform was put in place, that it was going to cost resources because under the legislation, that was new then, more children were going to come into protection. So, for example, the legislation was changed to include that chronic neglect of a child would be added to the definition of a child in need of protection; emotional abuse would be considered in terms of a child in need of protection. Children at risk of physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse and neglect; increased requirements for public and professional reporting of child abuse and neglect and sanctions for not reporting; introduction of standardized eligibility and risk assessment tools for all CASs: This was all mandatory. It was laid on by the

government, and everyone understood that that was going to increase costs for CASs.

The second initiative was an initiative of the McGuinty government itself, called the child welfare transformation, which began in 2006. This put a number of other requirements on CASs. There was a shift from intrusive investigative approaches to balancing risk with supporting families. Supporting families is a much more labour-intensive activity, with much more time spent searching for kin who may be interested in helping to care for a child—but that's a labour-intensive activity. Mandatory use of alternate dispute resolution prior to using court processes—but that is a labour-intensive activity. A need for a higher number of qualified and skilled staff who can work with complex families—again, an added cost. And there was a large increase in mandatory service and administrative requirements, policies, directives, regulations and standards related to services, including over 200 reporting requirements involving more casework and paperwork. Everyone understood that this initiative was going to add to the cost of children's aid societies too. But it's important to remember: These were initiatives of the provincial government, not of the CASs.

So the natural thing happened: Workloads went up, more and more complicated factors, more children coming into care—costs went up. But costs went up no more than the province's revenues, and certainly less than this government's overall expenditures.

Now the government says, mid-year, it's going to cut CAS budgets by \$23 million. This has placed a number of CASs across the province in crisis, because CASs have no choice. CASs cannot say, "We're going to turn this child away." CASs cannot say that a child in need of protection will simply be ignored. Children's aid societies are statutorily required to provide protection and child welfare services to children. In effect, this means they have no control over their own caseload.

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So let me use the children's aid society I'm most acquainted with, because I used to do legal work for them, and the predicament they've been put in. This is the children's aid society for the district of Rainy River. It's a small children's aid society. It's very close to the communities it serves. For the last three years, it has had a balanced budget. Its funding formula is one of the lowest in the province, and that's because it usually doesn't take a lot of children into care. It spends most of its time working with families, helping families so that children don't have to come into care. But their budget, a \$3-million budget, has been cut by over \$400,000 mid-year, and they've had three very unique children come to them.

One child was the subject of a court order. The child was taken before the court under the Youth Justice Act. The judge who heard the case has ordered this child into a specialized treatment home. Why? Because it was found as a fact in the court that this child has sexually molested a number of other young children. This child is

a risk to all children they come into contact with, so this child has been placed in a specialized residential treatment home. The cost is \$450 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away, send this child back out into the community where more children, other children, can be sexually molested? Of course not. So they've done what the court has ordered them to do.

Another child, found by a battery of experts to be a child who is a danger to themselves—a child who pulls out their own hair, who has attempted on some occasions to puncture their own eye, has attempted on other occasions to puncture their own eardrum, a child who is a danger to themselves and has been found to be so by a battery of experts—again has been placed in a specialized treatment home. The cost: \$350 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away and say, "You don't matter. You don't count"? Of course not. They don't do that.

Another child is very developmentally delayed with a series of very serious behavioural problems, and happens to come from a poor family. The family does not have a lot of resources. So the family cannot look after this child, cannot look after it because they do not have the financial wherewithal and simply because the mother cannot handle the day-to-day stress of trying to deal with a child who has so many developmental and behavioural needs. This child is placed in the protection of the children's aid society. Again, the cost of caring for this child is about \$350 a day.

What is the CAS to do? Turn this child away and say, "You don't matter. You don't count"?

This is the position that children's aid societies have been placed in. CASs have no control over how many children in need of protection, how many children in need of child welfare, how many of these children come through their doors. That is why not only must their budgets be maintained, but this government must agree that, at the end of the year, it will cover the costs of these children.

Again, this is not a children's aid society that's asked for an increase in budget over the years. It's a children's aid society that has managed within its budget and has provided good service. It is probably one of the most efficient, in terms of the optimum use of its funding, CASs in the province. But their budget has now been cut just as a number of children with very special needs, who are in need of child protection, come through the door.

What is to happen? I would argue this children's aid society and all children's aid societies in the province of Ontario must be provided with the money so that they can do the job that the law requires them to do.

Let me give you another example. This is another CAS that I'm acquainted with. It is Tikinagan Child and Family Services, which services the First Nation communities in the far north of Ontario, some of the most impoverished and challenged communities in this province. Tikinagan has had over a \$2-million budget cut. This is what they must deal with. In one community alone, over 40 children have been taken into care over the last month. The Tikinagan CAS cannot keep up with

their death reports to the ministry because of the high rate of suicide they're currently dealing with amongst children. In one community that has 800 children, over 400 children are not going to school. Children as young as six and seven are sniffing gasoline, diesel fuel and solvents. This is the challenge they're faced with. And what was the response of the government? To cut their budget by \$2 million. What is this agency to do? Ignore these six- and seven-year-old children who are sniffing gasoline and solvents? Ignore these other children who are committing suicide?

There must be a recognition in this House that children's aid societies must be provided with a budget which allows them to do the job they're legally mandated to do. That must be recognized here today, and any sort of budget cut that we've seen in here simply can't be allowed.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Ted Arnott): Further debate? I recognize the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs.

Hon. Brad Duguid: I listened carefully to the comments made by the previous member. I've looked very carefully at the resolution that he's put forward to this Legislature, and frankly, I'm pleased to support it.

It reads: "That, in the opinion of this House, children's aid societies in the province of Ontario ... must be provided with sufficient annual funding to allow them to provide the services necessary for the children and families they are required by law to serve." I'm happy to support that. I don't know if all members will. This is private members' hour, and members are free to vote as they will. I'd be surprised if any do not support this.

I think this is something, certainly, that we support not only in principle, but our government and our Minister of Children and Youth Services are supporting it in practice, and have indicated as well that, indeed, while there are challenges in ensuring the sustainability of children's aid society services across this province—I think all members are aware of some of the challenges that have occurred in the past. There have been issues in the past that have arisen to suggest there's a need to ensure that, as much as possible, the resources that are available are going to the most important factor in what we're talking about today. And what's that? That's the kids; that's the children. That's the most important thing that I think all of our minds have to be on as we go through these challenging times.

The fact of the matter is, and the minister has made it clear, as we go through this challenging time, as year-end dollars will not be available as they have been in the past—we are going through a global economic crisis. We all know that. It's affecting all governments around the world. Very few, if any, governments right now are going to find themselves in a surplus position, where they'll be able at the end of the year to come forward with surplus dollars to help out in areas where there may be requests. That's the world we live in right now, and we have to make sure that the agencies—not only children's aid societies; all agencies that are doing business with government need to know that those dollars just are not going to be as available as they were in the past.

That being said, though, let's be clear: This government is not going to let young children slide through the cracks. This government is not going to let young children who are at risk be at greater risk. They are not at greater risk today than they were before. There is more we need to do; I don't disagree with that. There's more we need to do for these young children at risk.

I've been in some of the communities that the member has talked about. I've spent the last year in this new portfolio, in fact, travelling some of those communities. The member lives in a riding where there are 51 First Nations communities, most of them far north communities that are experiencing challenges and whose children are experiencing severe challenges. He shared some of those stark realities with us. We, together, have to work to ensure that those young children are getting the services they need, are getting access to the hope that all other Ontario children have, are getting access to economic development opportunities and education and services when they are at risk such as children's aid societies provide.

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There is no argument with that whatsoever, and there's more work we all have to do. This government, though, is committed to doing that. That's why we've tripled funding. Over the last 10 years, this province has tripled funding when it comes to children's aid societies. It has doubled funding over the last six years, and the same is true of the aboriginal groups.

Does that mean that all of the challenges are gone because we've done that? No. I think you're quite right to raise the fact that there are challenges, and we have to be cognizant of that. But the Minister of Children and Youth Services has said that as we go through these difficult times and as we look to these agencies to do all they can to reduce administration costs, to ensure that all of the dollars that each and every one of us is providing to these very important agencies are going to the children—as we're going through that exercise, it's very important that we continue, and the children and youth services ministry will continue, to work with each and every one of those agencies to ensure, indeed, that this is being done in a proper and appropriate way. The minister has committed to that in this House. She has committed to that outside of this House.

I've had the opportunity to work with her on the aboriginal side. I've been meeting with aboriginal leaders, and there are issues being raised in the aboriginal communities about this issue. We'll continue to work with aboriginal leaders across this province to ensure that this is done in the right way.

I'm just going to speak very briefly in the minute or so I have left to say this as well. I think it's important to note—and the member from Kenora–Rainy River would probably agree with this, because his community has probably had these experiences—that the six aboriginal children's aid societies are different. I think it is something we need to note and, as a government, take note of. They are different. They do have a variety of different challenges, whether it be the element of risk involved in

some of the young people they need to deal with or whether it be the challenge of distances that they have to travel, which increases, obviously, administration costs. So certainly in my capacity as Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and as a member here in this Legislature, I'll continue to work with the Minister of Children and Youth Services, and I thank her for the dedication she's engaging in this issue and for the fact that she is continuing to work with those children's aid societies to ensure this is done in the right way.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Frank Klees: I, without question, of course, will be supporting this resolution brought forward by the member from Kenora–Rainy River.

Speaker, you know that I have raised the issue of funding for children's aid societies on a number of occasions during question period and members' statements over the last number of weeks, and it comes from my concern that the York Region Children's Aid Society is being grossly underfunded.

I'm disheartened by the statement made by the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs. I hear what he is saying in words, but what I don't understand is how he, as a cabinet minister, can say, as he did just now, that the Minister of Children and Youth Services is supporting in practice what the member from Kenora–Rainy River is asking us to do, and that's why he can support this resolution.

Speaker, that is not happening. If that was happening, there would be no need for this resolution. If that was happening, there would be no need for me repeatedly to stand in this place and say to the minister, "Please look at the reality of what is happening in York region." The budget has been cut by \$5.5 million. It's one of the fastest-growing regions in this country. There are more and more demands on that children's aid society to meet the needs legislated by this Legislature, prescribed by the government. The York Region Children's Aid Society doesn't go around saying, "How can we create more work for ourselves?" They are simply responding to what the government of the day has told them they must do. What is happening is that the board of directors of the York Region Children's Aid Society is saying to me, "We feel obligated to deliver the service, but we also feel a liability as a board because we have a prescribed definition of services and we're going to be incapable of delivering those services." It comes to the point where I asked the minister here, on a number of occasions, if she will look at the York Region Children's Aid Society, at the challenges that they're facing. And what is the response that I get? As recently as this morning's question period, the minister responsible for children stands in her place and tells me that since 2003, there has been this much additional funding. That "over the last decade," to quote her, there has been an increase in funding for York, and that is supposed to be the answer.

As I pointed out to the minister, what happened a decade ago or what happened in 2003, regardless of what the increase in funding over that time may have been—it

may make for a good prescribed answer. It may sound good as a sound bite, but it does nothing to address the reality on the ground of children at risk in need. It has nothing to do and in no way addresses, as the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs says, that the minister is supporting in practice what the intent of this resolution says. I say to you that is not what is going on, and we're appealing to this government to prioritize spending.

Look, the argument is made again by the minister responsible for children, "It's tough economic times. There's only so much money to go around." Well, this is precisely where government and cabinets are called on to make decisions that prioritize the importance of vulnerable people in this province. This is exactly the time when governments are called on to say, "We have limited resources, and yes, there have to be reductions in expenditures"—but we don't do it on the backs of the most vulnerable in our society. We don't do it on the backs of children who are at risk and we don't do it by saying to an agency that's desperate to meet the requirements and the mandate of this government, to meet the needs of those at-risk children—we don't go to those agencies saying, "Well, you know what? You're on your own." They shouldn't be on their own. They are performing the duties and responsibilities that they're called on to do.

I want to point out once again to the minister responsible for children, specifically with regard to York region—this is in a letter that was sent to the previous minister in which the York Region Children's Aid Society points out something very important. I want to read this into the record and I hope that the minister is listening. I quote from this letter: "Were York Region Children's Aid Society funded equitably on a child per capita basis, equivalent with the average of other Ontario CAS agencies, our funding would be approximately \$113 million versus the allocated \$38.1 million, an amount that is less than the agency received in 2007-08. York region residents are being unfairly disadvantaged."

The expectation that I had when the new minister was appointed is that she would set the reset button and say, "Wait a minute now. As a new minister, I want to take seriously my obligations." As she responded to me during one of my questions, here's what the minister said to me: She wants to work with the York CAS "to ensure that children are put first and that their outcomes are a priority." I would have thought that if that was what the minister really wanted to do, she would sit down and look at these numbers and realize that the York Region CAS is grossly underfunded compared to the average of all other CAS units across the province.

1540

I want to read again from this letter, and I hope the minister is listening: "York CAS receives the lowest funding per unit of service of any CAS in the GTA, on a funding-per-case basis. In fact, York CAS is being directed to make cuts that represent 25% of the funding reductions for the entire child welfare system in Ontario. Were we to be funded at the same level per case as Peel CAS, our budget would be balanced."

Here's what is so puzzling for me. We stand alone, myself and my colleague Julia Munro, as opposition MPPs. There are three other MPPs representing York region ridings who are sitting on the government side, who have the minister's ears. I am not hearing one word from those members of the government side challenging the minister to at least bring York region up to par with funding of other CAS units, not only in the GTA but across the province.

I am simply saying, where is the justice and where is the fairness in how this government is applying funding? The Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said that he would be voting for this resolution. I am so pleased to hear that, but if that is the case, then I would hope that the minister will also, as he sits at the cabinet table, support his colleague the minister responsible for funding children's aid societies and that he would be there as an advocate in support of the minister to ensure that the allocation of funds is made at the cabinet table so that she can do what the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs claims she is doing and we know factually is not the case.

If I take heart at all from the debate that is going on this afternoon, it's at least the fact that one cabinet minister has said he agrees with the resolution. Now it's a matter of putting the resolution up against the reality of what is actually taking place when funds are allocated. I will be looking, as every member of this House will be looking, as every CAS across the province will be looking, to see if the rhetoric matches with the reality. If it doesn't, we have a serious problem in this province.

I want to wrap up my comments with a letter that was received by the minister, written by the York region police services board: "York region CAS is one of our most important partners in ensuring safety and security in our communities. CAS provides an invaluable service to the vulnerable children of York region. The board urges the province to reconsider its funding decision"—which, by the way, was a decision to reduce funding to the York region CAS by \$5.5 million—"to ensure that the safety and protection of our children continues to remain a top priority."

We'll be looking for the minister and her cabinet colleagues during these difficult economic times to ensure that the allocation of funds to the most vulnerable in our society, at-risk children, is prioritized. There are many, many, many other programs that can be set aside for another day. This is not one of them; it must be considered a priority of this government.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Gilles Bisson: I obviously will be supporting my colleague's motion in regard to funding for children's aid societies in this province. I, along with Mr. Hampton and Mr. Klees, have raised, on a number of occasions in this House, questions to the Minister of Children and Youth Services in regard to what is happening across Ontario vis-à-vis year-end funding.

It was interesting to note that the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs said, "All we're doing is we're not going to renew year-end funding." My Lord, that's the whole

issue. The issue is that children's aid societies, by way of mandate, have to provide certain services that we, as the Legislature, have passed in laws. So they have no choice. The children's aid societies just can't all of a sudden say, "Oh, there is a child at risk. Nothing to do—don't worry. I don't have year-end funding. I'll just go off and do something else." They have legislation that they have to follow and if they were to not act in regard to an issue within their jurisdiction when it comes to protecting a child, they could be charged under the act.

The year-end funding is to deal with that exact situation, because the children's aid societies, as they prepare their budgets for the year, never know from year to year exactly how many kids they're going to come into contact with based on what is going on in their communities. We know, for example, because of what's happening in this recession, it is a fact that people in a time of recession—we see all kinds of things demonstrate themselves within the home: more stress within the family, sometimes drugs or alcohol, physical abuse, sexual abuse, all kinds of things that happen when people lose their jobs. Therefore, year-end funding is meant to say, "Here is the money in order to offset costs that you have no control of because in your care you had certain children that you needed to provide services to."

I'm looking at the communities that I represent in Timmins—James Bay and I have a great number of children's aid societies. I've got the Timmins Children's Aid Society in Timmins; I've got the centre Jeanne Sauvé that goes from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake; we've got Payukotayno, who does all of the James Bay when it comes to First Nations communities; and we've got Kunuwanimano, which does the aboriginal urban community and are working towards becoming accredited as a full-time CAS. These people have no choice.

What's going on? Payukotayno is losing \$1 million in a year in their funding. And here is the reality: To service these kids there are no roads to any of these communities. So when a worker has to be sent up to Attawapiskat or Peawanuck or whatever community it might be, it's not like you drive two minutes down the road to go visit the child at their home or to visit them in some centre somewhere; you've got to charter an aircraft to bring people in. If the child has got to come out, you've got to charter the aircraft to bring the child out. You can't control those costs. You have no way of knowing what kind of crisis is going to happen from community to community and how many kids are going to be under the care of Payukotayno. They're being told \$1 million is their year-end funding that will be affected, and the government and the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs come here today and say, "We're not cutting the funding; we're just not going to do the year-end funding." Well, for Payukotayno, it means \$1 million a year, and what are they going to do? Parents are going to be in the position of having to sue the government because the children's aid societies have not done what they were told to by mandate.

Centre Jeanne Sauvé on Highway 11 from Smooth Rock Falls to Constance Lake: Depending on whose

figures you listen to—the provincial ministry's figures or centre Jeanne Sauvé themselves—they're looking at somewhere in the neighbourhood of \$700,000 to \$900,000, in very similar circumstances that were pointed out by my colleague Mr. Hampton. We have kids that are in need that are having to go in special residential programs that cost a lot of money, anywhere from \$300 to \$400, \$450 a day to put those kids in those programs. There's nowhere else to put them. Therefore, what do we do? Does the children's aid society at centre Jeanne Sauvé say "Oh well, too bad. We're not going to deal with these kids. So what? They're in danger, but maybe things will work out if we just close our eyes"? They have to act. They've got no choice. They've got to do what they're mandated to do by way of legislation. So yes, the year-end funding is critical for them to be able to do what needs to be done.

I've asked questions to the minister, and I've gone over and talked to the minister, and what I was told was, "Well, you know, all you've got to do is—these centres, you know what it is: They haven't done a lot when it comes to amalgamation of services with other organizations and finding ways to save in administration." My Lord, they led the way. Timmins children's aid society amalgamated with another organization about six, seven years ago and have lessened administration, far less than what it used to be before. Centre Jeanne Sauvé has done the same. They've co-located their offices together, which means to say you don't have to pay rent in two separate places. They've done things in order to share administration, share workers, share resources, computers, payroll—they've done all that stuff. I was a bit shocked when the minister said that all they've got to do to offset is to trim some of that fat. Well, there's no more fat. We did that five or six years ago. These centres are being asked, "Well, you know, make due with less," and all I can tell you is that we can't. These children's aid societies in communities like mine, in Toronto, in Kenora—Rainy River, or wherever they might be, are mandated by legislation to provide services to the most vulnerable children in our province.

1550

I would say this in the few seconds I have left: If we as a Legislature—and, more importantly, this Liberal government—cannot take care of the most basic needs of children, then I think it speaks volumes as to the commitment of this government when it comes to the kids of this province.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: It's a pleasure to join the debate, and it's interesting to hear some of the remarks that are coming from the members opposite. I had the privilege, prior to being in this House, to serve 12 years on the board of my own children's aid society in the region of Halton, serving under the Liberal government, serving under the NDP government and serving under the Conservative government. Let me tell you that nobody's got their hands clean on this file.

Mr. Frank Klees: We're talking about today.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Yeah, you want to talk about today, Frank, but what you don't want to talk about is how we got in the mess in the first place. I was on the board, I was serving as president, when you were running the government, Mr. Klees. When you were in the government, Mr. Klees, we were running into problems far worse than are being run into today. So you know that your hands aren't clean on this file, Mr. Klees. If there's anywhere that you could put the blame for what's happening today, we can go right back to your government. The NDP at least tried.

Anyway, getting back to the point—

Mr. Frank Klees: That's despicable.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Despicable? The way you treated children's aid societies, Mr. Klees, was despicable, and to stand up here—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. Order. Stop the clock for a minute.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I would ask honourable members to be respectful to each other and to speak through the Chair.

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've stopped the clock. Have a seat, please. Sit down. Sit down, honourable member, just for a moment.

I would ask members not to banter back and forth and to speak through the Chair and show some respect for the fact that the honourable member from Oakville has the floor.

Honourable member from Oakville.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Thank you, Speaker. It's still a pleasure to join the debate and I'm still intending to support the motion that's on the floor. But let me tell you some of the things that we had to deal with in the past and why I think it's important that we come to some conclusion and that we come to some sustainable situation that's got some permanence attached to it.

There are people in our society who are always prepared to talk about children and to talk about child welfare. There are some in our society who are prepared to go a step further than that and serve on the boards of children's aid societies, take on executive positions, try to do something about that and advocate for kids in the child welfare system. Those are the sort of people that I was proud to be associated with for 12 years.

We still have an odd circumstance within the funding system where you have exceptional-circumstances funding. What that means to anyone who knows the system is that you will get paid if you take the child out of the house. Now, sometimes the best place for the child who is in need to be is with the family, and the family needs work. But the funding won't flow in those circumstances. The funding will only flow under the exceptional-circumstances funding that comes when you remove the child from the family.

We also had a situation under the NDP government, and you might remember this, Mr. Hampton. We had a pay equity issue, and we were trying to be of some

assistance at the Halton Children's Aid Society. We were trying to come to some agreement that would allow the province to deal with the pay equity issue. What we were told by the bureaucrats—to be honest with you, it wasn't by the politicians, but by the provincial bureaucrats who were under your control at the time—was to take the pay equity money away from the kids, to make a pay equity deal with money that was designated for children's services. That quite simply is wrong—I'm sure you would agree with that—and I don't know if you knew about it, but that's the sort of thing that was going on.

As one of the frustrated members of the boards of children's aid societies around the province, I can empathize with them, because I've been there under each and every government that presents itself in the House today and purports to support these children. I agree with the member. I agree with the statement he has brought forward that these children must be provided with the services and with the money they need. But I also agree with the direction that's being taken by this government: that we must achieve a system that has some permanence attached to it so that the hell we put these organizations through over the past 15 or 20 years is not allowed to continue.

Our government has done a lot to increase funding over the past few years. It simply isn't enough in a system that's not sustainable. When you see some of the increases in intake that some of these organizations are dealing with and some of the funding they're receiving, sometimes it matches up; sometimes it doesn't.

The intent of the commission is to bring this to some sort of conclusion that everybody agrees we can move forward on, and that would be the service providers themselves, the children's aid societies, the boards of those societies, and the people who purport to support the intent of those societies.

If you asked taxpayers around the province, "Is this a good place to spend money?", they would say, "Yes, it is." If you asked the taxpayers around the province, "Do you want this money spent in a way that's supportable, in a way that's sustainable, in a way that the organizations that actually provide the front-line service to the kids can rely on?", I think they would say that that is the way they want the money spent.

I'm proud to stand up here as a person who spent 12 years as a board member with the children's aid society. I didn't just talk about kids; I tried to do something about kids: kids who are in need, kids who are in circumstances that we can only imagine and kids who are in circumstances that they simply shouldn't be in. And kids are still in those circumstances today.

I think the member brings forward a healthy motion. It has allowed debate to take place. I believe it's going to get support from all three parties. I think that's a good thing, I think that's a positive thing and I think it's going to mean good things for the kids in our society who are in need of protection.

I thank the member for bringing it forward. He has my support. I hope he has the support of the whole House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Ms. Cheri DiNovo: For those who are watching at home and wonder what we're debating, it's a motion by our member from Kenora–Rainy River that fell on the heels of a secret cut in budgets to children's aids across the province that the McGuinty government made. On June 26, 2009, the McGuinty government quietly cut \$23 million from 53 children's aid societies in Ontario. Twenty per cent of that hit was borne by First Nations children's aids.

In response to the member from Oakville: Now that he is an elected representative here, knowing what he knows, having served on the board of a children's aid, he should be absolutely lobbying his cabinet and his Premier to fix the situation. It's not enough to cast blame around the room. What we're asking for here is action now. There's only one side of the floor that can take that action, and that's the government side. Only one side of the floor can take that action now, save a child's life now. We're not looking back 15 years or 10 years; we're talking about now. There are children in need now, and that's the simple reality.

If people at home are wondering who is being hit, it's not only First Nation children's aids; it's not only those in the north. Here are some other figures, and these are letters that members on this side and I'm sure members on that side have received from children's aid societies:

—Native Child and Family Services of Toronto: a 9.5% decrease in funding, a hit of \$1.5 million;

—Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County: a 10% cut, \$2.1 million;

—Niagara Family and Children's Services: \$2.9 million, a 7.3% cut;

—Durham: 5.2%, \$3.9 million;

—London-Middlesex: \$3.9 million, 6%; and

—Simcoe county: a 13% cut.

These are cuts for mandated services. As the member from Timmins–James Bay said, if the children's aid societies do not deliver the services mandated by this Legislature, they can be charged. They can be taken to court.

These are not frills. These are not expenses that can be cut. What you are cutting, when you cut to children's aid societies, is the welfare of children. That's what you're cutting. Make no mistake about it: That's who is hurting.

I find it unconscionable that on the government side they can defend this in any way, shape or form. The moral and ethical tenor of any administration is how it treats the most vulnerable. I believe there's no question—we would all agree—that the most vulnerable in Ontario are the children that children's aid societies see and have to contend with. Those are the most vulnerable, and what this government is doing is literally cutting the funding that goes to those children directly. It's unconscionable—unbelievable.

1600

Now, the context, for those watching at home, of course, is that not everybody in Ontario is feeling the hit of the recession. Children are; we've just shown that.

Children's aid societies are. Not everyone: We all know about the billion-dollar boondoggle at eHealth. Consultants don't feel the brunt of the cutbacks in McGuinty's Ontario. Consultants are doing well, thank you very much—a million dollars a day.

Maybe if we rebrand the children's aid societies as consulting firms, they'll get a little bit more money from this government. If we put them in a position to consult with some of the bureaucracies for this government, maybe then they'll get looked after. If they join the Liberal Party, maybe then some money will flow to the children's aid societies and to the children who need it.

That's the reality here: Friends of the government, friends of the Liberal Party, consultants who work for bureaucracies are some of the best paid in the world. They make money during the recession in McGuinty's Ontario, but children who need the help of children's aid societies—no, they don't. They don't count. They get cut. That's the reality.

I can't believe that members opposite who have children's aid societies in their ridings aren't defending them. Come on. Again, it's not only the test of a government; it's a test of a person. The individuals, particularly those who actually know what working in a children's aid society looks like, what sitting on the board of a children's aid society looks like, are absolutely implicated, and they are absolutely morally and ethically obligated to do something for those children.

It's absolutely staggering to me. I have had to deal with families in crisis for a long time, I have had to deal with children's aid societies and I have had to hear from children's aid societies, not in my riding but in their ridings, because they're not listening. They write to our members on this side of the House, because the government isn't listening.

Here's my advice: If you want to make money, if you want to balance your budget and if you want to help children in children's aid societies, join the Liberal Party and get jobs as consultants. That's the only way you're going to make any money in McGuinty's Ontario, and that's the only way you're going to be looked after. If you're a child, if you're an abused child, if you are a child who is at risk of harming yourself or others, then God help you—literally, God help you—because the McGuinty government will not.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate?

Seeing none, Mr. Hampton, you have up to two minutes for your response.

Mr. Howard Hampton: I want to thank all the members for their contributions to the debate, but I want to bring the debate back to the reality of today. The reality is that this year children's aid societies had their budgets cut by \$23 million mid-year. That means they're operating with \$23 million less than they operated with last year.

We're also seeing in Ontario today an economy that is not exactly flourishing. Unemployment is growing. Poverty is increasing. Families are under greater stress than ever before. This results in more children being put at risk.

If you look at where 20% of the cut to CAS budgets happened, it happened to native child and family services, some of the most challenged and hard-pressed CASs in the province. It is unprecedented—it has never happened before in Ontario—but 37 of some 50 children's aids societies have used section 14 of the act to have their budgets reviewed, because they know they can't meet the needs now, never mind deal with the budget cut that is being imposed.

This has real repercussions for kids. Kids who are some of the most vulnerable in Ontario are being forced to wait for services or they can't get them, and that has real repercussions for the CASs themselves, because some of the people, the volunteers who serve on the boards, are looking at the situation and can't, with integrity, continue. They can't pretend to the children in their area that they're going to provide services when they know they don't have the money to do it. And I say to the government, if you think that amalgamation is going to do it, some of our CASs already have geographic areas larger than most European countries. More amalgamation is not going to do it.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The time provided for private members' public business has expired.

SENATORS' SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will deal first with ballot item number 43, standing in the name of Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 67, An Act to provide for the election in Ontario of nominees for appointment to the Senate of Canada. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion will please say "aye."

All those opposed will please say "nay."

In my opinion, the nays have it.

We will call in the members after we deal with the next two ballot items.

MISSING PERSONS ALERT

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 44.

Ms. Aggelonitis has moved private member's notice of motion number 117. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETIES

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We'll now deal with ballot item number 45.

Mr. Hampton has moved private member's notice of motion number 118. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry? Carried.

Motion agreed to.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): We will now call in the members. This will be a five-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1607 to 1612.

SENATORS' SELECTION ACT, 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LE CHOIX DES SÉNATEURS

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved second reading of Bill 67.

All those in favour of the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Ayes

Arnott, Ted
Elliott, Christine
Hardeman, Ernie

Klees, Frank
Marchese, Rosario
Miller, Norm

Runciman, Robert W.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those opposed to the motion will please rise and remain standing until recognized by the Clerk.

Nays

Aggelonitis, Sophia
Albanese, Laura
Berardinetti, Lorenzo
Colle, Mike
Delaney, Bob
Dhillon, Vic
Dickson, Joe
Duguid, Brad
Flynn, Kevin Daniel
Hoskins, Eric

Jaczek, Helena
Jeffrey, Linda
Johnson, Rick
Kwinter, Monte
Lalonde, Jean-Marc
Mangat, Amrit
Moridi, Reza
Oraziotti, David
Phillips, Gerry
Qadri, Shafiq

Ramal, Khalil
Rinaldi, Lou
Ruprecht, Tony
Sandals, Liz
Sergio, Mario
Smith, Monique
Sousa, Charles
Takhari, Harinder S.
Wynne, Kathleen O.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 7; the nays are 29.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Second reading negatived.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All matters relating to private members' public business having been completed, I do now call orders of the day.

ORDERS OF THE DAY

EMPLOYMENT PROTECTION FOR FOREIGN NATIONALS ACT (LIVE-IN CAREGIVERS AND OTHERS), 2009

LOI DE 2009 SUR LA PROTECTION DES ÉTRANGERS DANS LE CADRE DE L'EMPLOI (AIDES FAMILIAUX ET AUTRES)

Resuming the debate adjourned on October 26, 2009, on the motion for second reading of Bill 210, An Act to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers

and in other prescribed employment and to amend the Employment Standards Act, 2000 / *Projet de loi 210, Loi visant à protéger les étrangers employés comme aides familiaux et dans d'autres emplois prescrits et modifiant la Loi de 2000 sur les normes d'emploi.*

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Ms. Smith, you had the floor. Would you like the floor again or would you like further debate?

Hon. Monique M. Smith: I think we'll go for further debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Further debate on Bill 210?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity to speak to this bill, and I have to open my notes here with respect to the bill's summary.

We are in some respects reluctantly supporting this legislation. We certainly approve of the stated purpose and agree that its provisions are necessary, but I think it would be helpful to have a bit of a background with respect to why this bill is before the Legislature.

I think many of us in this place will recall the allegations surrounding a Liberal member of Parliament, Ruby Dhalla, and the fact that live-in caregivers in her family home made very serious allegations with respect to abuse on the part of Ms. Dhalla and her family members. They made those in the presence of two members of the McGuinty Liberal cabinet: the Minister of Labour, who is responsible for protecting, if you will, foreign nationals, individuals in the position that these caregivers were in; and the Minister of Education, who also sat in on this meeting where they heard these very serious and disturbing allegations being made.

As we were told later, what was their response to hearing those allegations in their presence? They apparently gave the individuals some brochures and a 1-800 number and did not carry it any further. Certainly that, by and of itself, was very disturbing, there's no question about that, when we're talking about very vulnerable people, people who have limited language skills and were placed in difficult circumstances.

I want to say that this is not, from our perspective, unusual: the fact that, in our view and in the view, I think, of the third party, the NDP, the ministers who heard these allegations were reluctant—and I'm being polite—to bring those allegations forward into the public view. We have to ask a very legitimate question: Why? Because a prominent member of the Liberal Party was involved with respect to those allegations: Ruby Dhalla, a federal member of Parliament, a federal Liberal member of Parliament.

When you look at what we've seen over the past few months with respect to the eHealth scandal and the efforts to protect Liberal insiders and to, in some respects, enrich Liberal insiders in the eHealth scandal, and what we've seen subsequent to that, the effort to protect and to keep from public view the activities that occurred with respect to eHealth, that has very clear linkages to what we saw happen here. You have two very senior ministers of the McGuinty government in a

situation where serious allegations are being made against a Liberal member of Parliament, and they failed to act upon those. In fact, they tried to dismiss them. We wouldn't know about them today if the Toronto Star hadn't revealed the fact that this meeting occurred and those revelations were made in the presence of senior members of cabinet. That's the reality. We wouldn't have this legislation in front of us today if it weren't for the Toronto Star revelations, and we have to tie this in to what's happened with eHealth—

Hon. Brad Duguid: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I've seen off-topic in this place before, but he's way off topic. I'm not sure what his discussion has to do with live-in caregivers, but I'd ask you to take notice of that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I'd ask the honourable member to refer to the bill once in a while. Thank you.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Thank you, Speaker. I thought I was referring to the bill once in a while. Certainly, I'm talking about live-in caregivers. That's what this bill is all about and that's what we're talking about with respect to what drove this, what was the catalyst behind the drafting of this legislation.

1620

Mr. Frank Klees: Liberal incompetence.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: Not just Liberal incompetence, as my colleague suggests, but also the fact that there was an effort, revealed by the Toronto Star, to keep this under wraps, allegations of serious abuse of caregivers by a very prominent federal Liberal member of Parliament.

So I think it's eminently fair to draw linkages, I say to the minister, with respect to what we've seen with eHealth and your efforts to protect Liberal insiders and enrich Liberal insiders, and I suggest we've seen it with what's happened with the refusal to have a public inquiry and their shutting down of the public accounts committee when we wanted to call two of the key players in the eHealth scandal—a \$1-billion scandal, I might remind the minister. What do his Liberal colleagues do? They follow instructions from the Premier's office, like they did here in private members' public business.

Mr. Mike Colle: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: He's talking about a bill that regulates foreign caregiver recruitment agencies and protects foreign caregivers from abuse by these agencies, and he's totally off the bill that's before us and continues to do that.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The Speaker's job is to facilitate free speech, and I think Mr. Runciman has shown a linkage to the bill in his debate.

Mr. Runciman.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I understand the concern of the members opposite on the Liberal benches. They certainly don't want us to even talk about this. They will not open this up to the light of public view. They attempted to keep this under wraps until the Toronto Star revealed what was happening with respect to these nannies, these foreign caregivers, people who are very, very vulnerable, with limited language skills. Yet two

senior Liberal ministers would not take any action—“Here’s a brochure. Here’s a 1-800 number”—because a prominent Liberal member of Parliament was the subject of those accusations, and members of her family.

Hon. Brad Duguid: Mr. Speaker, on a point of order: If you were listening closely, I think you would have heard a pretty bona fide case of impugning motive with that last statement.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I’ve certainly heard this debate previously in the House, and the Speaker has not ruled it out of order, so I’m not inclined to either.

The member for Leeds-Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: As I’ve said, folks sitting over there on the Liberal benches are perturbed by the fact that we’re raising these issues, because we’ve seen what has happened with the public accounts committee, where they’ve closed the door on listening to the two key principals—Sarah Kramer, the former CEO; and Dr. Alan Hudson, the former chair—with respect to the \$1-billion eHealth boondoggle.

This is indicative of the way this Liberal government reacts. They try to keep these insider scandals hidden from public view: the fact that their friends have been enriched and the fact that people may have linkages clearly right into the corner office of the Premier, because we see these people in here on a daily basis, following their instructions. They have no minds of their own apparently; we saw that here earlier today in private members’ public business.

On the basis of what’s happening in public accounts and their refusal to have a public inquiry, Mr. Speaker, I have no recourse than to move adjournment of the debate.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved adjournment of the debate. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour of the motion, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1624 to 1654.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour of the motion will rise and be counted.

All those opposed will rise and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 3; the nays are 27.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate?

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I appreciate the opportunity. I don’t think anyone viewing this should be surprised by the results of that vote, given the arrogance of the Liberal majority government.

I’ll speak to Bill 210, Speaker, before you caution me, which is titled the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act (Live-in Caregivers and Others). Essentially, Speaker, as I know you are very much aware,

as a former labour critic on this side of the House, this is a bill designed to protect foreign nationals employed as live-in caregivers. It deals with other issues as well.

I indicated in my opening comments that the Progressive Conservative opposition will support the bill. We approve of its stated purpose and agree that the provisions contained within the legislation are necessary. There are a number of concerns, but I think one that jumps out immediately is warrantless entry. Section 34 of the bill, Speaker, which I’m sure you’re familiar with, indicates that the inspectors will be provided with the wherewithal to enter premises. I’ll read that section:

“An employment standards officer may, without a warrant, enter and inspect any place in order to investigate a possible”—a possible—“contravention of this act or to perform an inspection to ensure that this act is being complied with.”

I want to reinforce our concerns about the use of this kind of government power, which seems to be endemic within the McGuinty Liberal government. We see this creeping into all kinds of legislation—the granting of special powers to government employees for warrantless entry. That should be a concern of government members, but of course, we know that they have no concerns. If they’re given the green light, if they’re given their speaking points from the Premier’s office, the corner office, they have no concerns. They’re not thinking about these things as individual members or representing the concerns perhaps of their constituents; they’re here to represent the wishes of Premier McGuinty and his unelected staff, the people who surround the Premier. That’s what we’re seeing here with Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act.

Again, because there may be new viewers to this broadcast, I want to remind those folks and others that really the catalyst for this legislation is the Toronto Star. I’m, on occasion, critical of the Toronto Star because they have, I think it’s pretty well accepted, a Liberal bias editorially. But I have to compliment the press corps at Queen’s Park. I think they do a pretty darned good job in terms of investigative reporting—because we’ve seen the reduction in staff in the press gallery at Queen’s Park over the years that I’ve been here; a dramatic decrease. The resources available for the print and electronic media simply aren’t what they used to be for investigative journalism. The Star is perhaps the leader at Queen’s Park with respect to revealing these stories and getting them out before the public.

With respect to Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, the Toronto Star really deserves the credit for this piece of legislation being before us today, because they revealed the fact that two senior members of the McGuinty Liberal government—the Minister of Labour, who’s responsible for this legislation, responsible for protecting vulnerable people working in the province of Ontario, and a very senior member of the McGuinty cabinet, the Minister of Education, being present at a public meeting where two live-in caregivers—I believe they were Filipino nationals, if

I'm correct, and I will apologize if I'm not correct in that, but I think they were from the Philippines—who had difficulty communicating in English, females, vulnerable individuals, complained to two ministers of the crown about abuse in a situation where a magic name appeared—I call it a magic name—of a Liberal member of Parliament, the name of Ruby Dhalla. The allegations made by these caregivers implicated Ms. Dhalla and members of her family. They were very serious allegations of abuse.

1700

The ministers apparently listened, but how did they react? I think that's the key here with respect to what we're talking about today: Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act. They listened, and what did they do? How did they react? Apparently, according to the *Toronto Star* and what we've heard subsequently, they provided these very concerned female foreign caregivers with a brochure and a 1-800 number, and that was it.

Now just think about it. This is explosive in its nature. Put yourself in that position as a member of the Legislature. You have these very serious allegations about a prominent figure in public life in this province. I would call that—I think accurately—explosive. Dynamite. These are very serious allegations, and what happened? Nothing, absolutely nothing with respect to the ministers engaged in this, until somehow it leaked to the *Toronto Star*, it was a front-page story, and now, miraculously, we have legislation to address these very real concerns.

I said this earlier and raised the ire of some of the members opposite, but I think it's a legitimate point to make in this discussion: What drove this legislation? What's behind this legislation? Is it legitimate, real concern about these vulnerable individuals, many of them foreign nationals—most of them, probably—young women with very limited English language skills? Is the real reason behind Bill 210 genuine concern on the Liberal government benches?

Mr. Ernie Hardeman: I don't think so.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: I don't think so either. It's the fact that it became public knowledge that two of their ministers had ignored serious allegations. And why did they do it? Again, I think this is legitimate to be raised in the context of the debate on Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act.

The reality is—we have to draw these conclusions, and I think they're fair—that the reason this was not handled in an appropriate way and the ministers did not react in an appropriate way is because it involved a very prominent member of the Liberal Party—case closed.

When I draw parallels with the eHealth scandal, again irritating especially the Minister of Aboriginal Affairs, the \$1-billion scandal on the doorstep of the McGuinty Liberal government, it again involves Liberal insiders, people who were enriched—

Mr. Bob Delaney: On a point of order, Speaker: I direct your attention to standing order 23(b)—the member for Leeds–Grenville has clearly directed his speech

“to matters other than ... the question under discussion”—and as well, standing order 23(h), making “allegations against another member,” and standing order 23(i), imputing “false or unavowed motives to another member,” all of which are being violated.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I've heard this type of debate before, and it certainly hasn't been ruled out of order, and so I'm not inclined to.

The honourable member from Leeds–Grenville has the floor.

Mr. Robert W. Runciman: It really pains me to agitate the member from Mississauga–Streetsville. We're heading off to a one-week constituency break, and I certainly hope that I can improve his approach to matters in this place in the minutes I have left in this discussion.

I think that how you react to these situations and why you react in the way you do is relevant, I say to the member, and important to the people of the province of Ontario. I have suggested that Bill 210, the Employment Protection for Foreign Nationals Act, is the result of a public revelation of efforts on the part of ministers not to act appropriately. We've seen the same thing in eHealth, where you are refusing to allow the key principals in that scandal to appear before the public accounts committee—a bare minimum—and at the same time refusing to have a public inquiry.

As a result, I have no recourse but to move adjournment of the House.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Mr. Runciman has moved adjournment of the House. Is it the pleasure of the House that the motion carry?

All those in favour, please say “aye.”

All those opposed, please say “nay.”

In my opinion, the nays have it.

Call in the members. This will be a 30-minute bell.

The division bells rang from 1706 to 1736.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): All those in favour will please stand and be counted.

All those opposed will please stand and be counted by the Clerk.

The Clerk of the Assembly (Ms. Deborah Deller): The ayes are 2; the nays are 24.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I declare the motion lost.

Further debate.

Mr. Mike Colle: On a point of order, Mr. Speaker: I'm just wondering, if the member from Leeds–Grenville moved a motion to, first of all, adjourn the debate, and then he moved a motion to adjourn the House, and then he didn't even come back for the vote that he moved, how is that in order?

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you. As you know, you can't refer to another member's attendance or absence in the House at any time, so that is not a point of order.

Further debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: But it was clever; that's the point.

It's a pleasure to speak to Bill 210. I want to welcome my Liberal friends; there are so many there today. They are here for me.

We're talking Thursday. We're on live. It's November 5 and it's Thursday night at 5:37, and so many of my Liberal friends are over there.

Interjections: And here.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: With all due respect, and here, so I thank you.

I also want to thank Chris, who's a regular viewer of this program, and I promised—

Interjection: Who's Chris?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It doesn't matter. It's Chris. Chris knows. He will know as soon as I do this who I'm talking about. He—

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I would just remind the honourable member that you have to speak through the Chair; there's no direct debate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Chris knows who I am talking about when I do this. So, Chris, welcome to this political channel. He's a good friend.

I'm going to be supporting this bill, of course. How could you not support the bill? Even when they do a little bit, how could you not support it? I don't expect much. I really don't. I know how it is, with the Liberal Party just inching its way forward ever so calmly, so slowly. Don't be rushed into making mistakes, because I know you've got to do it right. I know. To do a little more would be complicated, and you don't want to make any mistakes. I understand.

1740

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: Rosie, do you want us to come and sit next to you?

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We're going to support it.

Louie, I might have to criticize you. Don't do that.

Mr. Lou Rinaldi: No, no, no. I'm here to support you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay.

The Liberals have done a little bit with respect to nannies, live-in care workers. You've got to remember that my friend Cheri DiNovo from Parkdale-High Park raised these issues for months.

Where are you guys going? They're going for the wine. I understand. They're going to sit—

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, don't do that.

Mr. Kevin Daniel Flynn: Rosie, I'm going to sit next to you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. Oh, please. The Tories did that in the past, Jim. Do you remember? Were you part of that? Please, please.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Okay, I'm coming. I'm coming.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Come along.

Mr. Bob Delaney: We're here for you, Rosie. We're here for you.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: There is room for so many of you. Do you see the kinds of links we have with Liberals?

Mr. Bob Delaney: Yes. Hi to Peter as well.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We are so close.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Speaker, we love him so much.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes. You want to sit here?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Okay. But I need room—

Mr. Mario Sergio: You can stand.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I need room to move around.

Mr. Mario Sergio: No, it's okay. Here: There you go.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): The honourable member can't be in the member's chair. Member from Trinity-Spadina, are you in your seat? Listen, are you in your seat? Get in your seat or I'm going to—

Interjection: He needs the seat, Mario. He needs his chair.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): You're wasting your time.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's complicated, I know.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It's not only complicated; I'm totally confused now. Is that your seat?

Interjection: That is his seat.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Good. You have the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: I usually move it over because I need room, right? I hate to be confined, yes.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: He's a thespian. You know that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Is that allowed?

So, Speaker, they've done a little something with respect to recruiters of nannies.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Thank goodness.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You're quite right, and even Cheri DiNovo, the person who motivated you, gave you a lot of support to push you a little bit, and eventually the Minister of Labour presented this bill. God bless. But even she recognized that you've done a little something, so she thanked you, and I wanted to thank you as well.

You've done this a little late; that's not a problem. What you've done is make sure that you are banning recruitment fees charged to live-in caregivers, and henceforth employers will be required to pay such fees. This is the main component of this bill. There's another component, which I will get to in a few minutes.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Oh, there's more than that.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, that's about it. It's not much more than that, but I'll get to that.

The problem is—everyone knows what it is. Everyone knows the problem. These nannies are cheap labour; that's what it is. We import hundreds of thousands of people just to do the dirty work that no one wants to do here. We import them because they're cheap labour, because we get them to work not eight hours but 10, not 10 but 16—whatever it takes. We withhold the passports in the event that they are not compliant. In order to make them compliant, we hold on to the passports. Some people do that.

Interjection: Yes, bad ones.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Not everybody does that; the bad employers. Mike, sit down here.

There are some bad employers who do that on a regular basis. We know why they're doing it. They're

doing it because it's cheap labour and because they can, because these people don't know their rights and because these people speak another language and it's easy to abuse people. That's why they do it.

Canada is not the only one that's doing it; you know that. Many other—

Interjections.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Hey, guys, you've got to keep it down. Boys, you've got to keep it down, because I'm speaking.

Canada is not the only one doing it. Everybody's doing it. Germany had two million Turkish people, if not more, who went there as cheap labour. Of course, they hoped that most of the immigrants would leave. When they don't leave, it becomes a problem. The fact of the matter is, they only want them as cheap labour; they don't want them to settle down. The Italians are the same.

Mr. Mike Colle: And Holland—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Holland, same thing. The Italians love to have cheap labour; they just don't want them to stay. They love to get them in their restaurants to work for nothing. But when it comes to rights and special rights—just rights that everybody else has—they say, “No, we don't want you to stay. We don't really like you. We just like your cheap labour.” That's what it's about.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Everybody's doing it. So we are replacing permanent landed immigrants with permanent temporary workers.

Interjection.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Two hundred thousand? It's more. There's more than 260,000, because most of these are undocumented, done by my Liberal friends when Chrétien was there, done by my Harper friends now that he's there. It's growing.

The idea was that we're going to do it for a little while because Alberta is a strong province and they need cheap labour. They don't say cheap labour, but they need workers to come and do the work that nobody else wants to do. Then, lo and behold, the program expands like a big elastic. We're not talking a small elastic; we're talking a big elastic. And then, all of a sudden people start saying, “We've got a big problem on our hands. What do we do?”

Thank you for coming.

Hon. Brad Duguid: You lost me at the elastic.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: No, I lost you at the Liberal part.

So we are happy that some of the newspapers are doing good coverage on this. Haroon Siddiqui of the Toronto Star is one of my favourite writers, one of the most insightful of writers. I've quoted him before and I'll quote him again.

Mr. Shafiq Qaadri: He's a good Liberal.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good doctor friend: “He's a good Liberal”; he probably is. He's a good left-leaning Liberal. Often in this place I say, “Where are the left Liberals?” Over there, over here, and not one of them

stands up. If Haroon Siddiqui is a left-leaning Liberal, God bless, because he shows himself as such in the newspaper.

What does he say? He talks about indentured labour. By the way, indentured labour, because nobody ever defines it, and I suspect 90% of the public doesn't know what it is—I thought, for the benefit of those who don't know, that I would look it up just to make sure I've got the right language. It's “a contract binding one person to another for a given period of time.” So if you ever hear “indentured labour,” you'll have a clue what it means.

He goes on to say, “You import workers on short-term visas, tether them to one employer, bar them from bringing families, deny them state benefits and services, and then ship them back at the end of their contract.” Beautiful, isn't it? That's what we do. I don't think we should be proud of that, but that's exactly what we do. By the way, he uses the word “tether,” which is a lovely word, and I suspect 90% of the people don't know what that is. You know when you use a rope to tie an animal, in this case a human being, and you've got them on a short leash, right? They're on a leash, except for those who eventually break the leash and go underground, and then you've got some undocumented underclass that's running around the country looking for whatever work they can get just to stay here, without any of the rights that most Canadians enjoy.

He goes on to say, “Temporary workers may be exploited for up to four years. Many cannot join unions or apply for immigration.” I'm assuming here Haroon is saying, as New Democrats do, that they should be able to join a union—a good left-leaning Liberal, eh?

Interjection: A good Liberal.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yes, but most Liberals here and up there don't think that's a good idea.

“Abuses are inevitable—by recruiters who charge high fees or promise non-existent jobs, and by employers who pay lower than promised wages, provide inadequate housing or forfeit promises of paid travel to home countries”: This is the underbelly of the other part of what temporary workers have to face in this country. So caregivers still face abuse, except now we say recruiters cannot charge them a fee; the employers will do that, and then we say we've got some enforcement.

Here, let me read it: “Provision is made for the enforcement of these rights”—okay? And then it says, “Employment standards officers are permitted to undertake inspections and investigations”—yeah, sure—

Mr. Mike Colle: Yes, to help the caregivers. They can go there and check it out.

1750

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Except, Michael, please, less than 1% of Ontario workplaces get a visit from an employment standards office. Mario, do you know what they're saying? Less than 1%. How could you talk about—let me just see—“provision is made for the enforcement of these rights,” when you've got a couple of people all over the province? Remember, Ontario is three times bigger than Italy. This is a huge, huge country, and

Ontario is a huge place. You're going to have employment standard workers going around checking things out? Come on.

Mr. Mike Colle: It's never been here before. It's finally in the legislation.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: It's in the legislation; that's all that matters. Whether it happens or not is irrelevant. The fact of the matter is, it's in the legislation.

Mr. Mike Colle: Before they couldn't go in; now they can go in.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And now they can? It's all done; it's all settled. Safe.

The problem is, these people have 12 months to lodge a complaint. Not two years, not three, not four; it's 12 months. You're going to have some immigrant from the Philippines, or wherever they come from, with no knowledge of their rights, but after they get this bill, they will, because they're all going to read it, right, Mike? Yeah. No knowledge of their rights. The language is very, very shaky.

Mr. Mike Colle: Many speak English. Many Filipino caregivers speak English; that's their second language.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: All right, but I've got to make the case, and you've got to speak through the Speaker.

The problem is that they're not going to complain. Even though there's a bill that says you can, within 12 months in a two-year employment, who is going to have the courage to go to the employer and say, "This isn't nice, what you're doing"? They're not going to do it. It will not be enforced, first, and second, while they're in the employ of that individual, they're not going to feel that they have the power—because they don't—or the strength to be able to take an employer on and feel the government is on their side or that their employer is going to treat them fairly after they complain to the employment standards office that they're being abused. Do you know what I mean, Mario?

Mr. Mario Sergio: We have to communicate.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: My good friend Mario—Yorkview?

Mr. Mario Sergio: York West.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: —from York West—says we have to communicate these things. We've got to pass it on to the Minister of Labour.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We have to let them know.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And we've got to let them know. We're going to publicize it. We're going to publicize in it our newsletters, publicize it in the local newspapers, educate, inform them that they have rights; they have power. They shouldn't be afraid. They shouldn't be afraid because there's no imbalance of power between the employer and the care worker. There is no imbalance at all. Besides, the law protects you. It's as simple as that.

It's complicated stuff. We've got to strengthen, in my view, the enforcement mechanisms. We have to do this. You got to add a whole lot of workers.

By the way, even if you said you did, I wouldn't believe that you would. Even if you said it. Now that we

have a deficit of \$25 billion, we're talking about huge cuts—huge—all over. Nobody's going to be spared. Even if you said, "We're going to hire people," I wouldn't believe you because it would just be on paper. It wouldn't be real.

The real way to deal with this is to create a workforce that is well-paid. It's to create a child care system like Quebec's, where they pay \$7 a day versus our \$40 or \$60 a day. If working men and women had a place to take their children in a child care service with workers well-paid, we wouldn't have to recruit people to work for minimum wage or sometimes less. We shouldn't have to do that.

Mr. Mike Colle: We're doing it now, the four- and five-year-olds in schools. That's a good start.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: That's good, and I supported you guys on that. But does it deal it with years zero to four, that child care? It's absent. This is child care that is expensive, costly, and most middle-class women and men can't afford it. Most middle-class women and men can't find a place to put their child in.

What do we do? We recruit. We go to other countries, where we can bring them here, abuse, mistreat and use their resources as best as we can, and we do—we do. Why can't we create a better child care system?

Mr. Mike Colle: We had a national child care program.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Oh. It would be good to—

Mr. Mike Colle: Paul Martin had it on the table, and then you know what happened? It was a good program.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Within a three-month period, when Jack Layton says, "We're not supporting the Liberals," we lost it.

Mr. Mike Colle: Yeah, we did.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Because we didn't have three months. Paul Martin was going to introduce a national child care system. Within that three-month period from when Paul Martin said he's going to call the election to when Jack said, "No, we're not supporting you"—a three-month period—we would have had a national child care system. Come on.

Mr. Mike Colle: It was certainly on the books. It was there ready to go, and then Jack pulled the plug.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Yeah, ready to go in three months. Nothing happened.

Mr. Mike Colle: Jack and Olivia pulled the plug.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: We can't even get you guys to move an inch in three months, let alone more than one inch.

Mr. Mario Sergio: We've got to get this going, Rosario.

Mr. Mike Colle: You're cynical. It was ready to go.

Mr. Mario Sergio: This is good stuff. We've got to get this—

Interjections.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Order. I'm sure people watching at home are totally confused about who's actually speaking, so I would remind the honourable members that you're not to speak into the micro-

phones unless you're in your own seats. The honourable member from Trinity–Spadina exclusively has the floor.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, I've got to tell you, people watching like this interaction. They do. I've got to tell you that. You should do a poll. I'm serious. A whole lot of people watching this program say this is a boring program. You've got to make it exciting. You do. If you don't make it exciting, they're not going to watch you. So what we're doing is chatting, right? That's okay; I don't mind that.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Absolutely.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Some people don't like feedback. With some people you've got to be silent—absolutely—because if you say one word, you distract them, and the whole speech breaks down. I understand, but I like interaction, and the viewers like it, too, through you, Speaker.

Mr. Mario Sergio: It's the House in action.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: So this bill, it's okay. It moves the yardstick a little bit, and we're going to support it. But wouldn't it be nice if you could just move from nannies to other temporary workers in terms of rights? Wouldn't that be a good idea?

Mr. Mario Sergio: Yes, yes.

Mr. Mike Colle: In the regulation, it's possible to—

Mr. Rosario Marchese: And it's coming. If we elect another Liberal government two years from now, it will come. It will come. It'll take a while, maybe a couple of more years, but it will come.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Just in case I get two minutes, I'm going back to my seat.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: You need to speak for two minutes.

Mr. Mario Sergio: Maybe, it depends on the Speaker.

Mr. Rosario Marchese: Speaker, are you going to call this off, or do I have to finish it off or what? I have one minute.

Temporary workers need rights. Temporary workers need protection from the provincial government. They need protection from the federal government. Nannies, here in this particular instance, need greater protection than what we've got. They need more than 12 months to be able to lodge a complaint; we argue they should have four years. They need better and stronger enforcement in order to give the protections to nannies that they deserve.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): Thank you to the honourable members for their contribution to the debate.

Second reading debate deemed adjourned.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): I know all of us will join together once again in thanking our pages as this is their last moment with us.

Applause.

The Acting Speaker (Mr. Jim Wilson): It being just about 6 of the clock, this House stands adjourned until Monday, November 16, at 10:30 a.m.

The House adjourned at 1758.

LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO
ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE DE L'ONTARIO

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Speaker / Président: Hon. / L'hon. Steve Peters

Clerk / Greffière: Deborah Deller

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Arnott, Ted (PC)	Wellington–Halton Hills	
Arthurs, Wayne (LIB)	Pickering–Scarborough East / Pickering–Scarborough-Est	
Bailey, Robert (PC)	Samia–Lambton	
Balkissoon, Bas (LIB)	Scarborough–Rouge River	
Barrett, Toby (PC)	Haldimand–Norfolk	
Bartolucci, Hon. / L'hon. Rick (LIB)	Sudbury	Minister of Community Safety and Correctional Services / Ministre de la Sécurité communautaire et des Services correctionnels Attorney General / Procureur général
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Best, Hon. / L'hon. Margaret R. (LIB)	Scarborough–Guildwood	Minister of Health Promotion / Ministre de la Promotion de la santé
Bisson, Gilles (NDP)	Timmins–James Bay / Timmins–Baie James	
Bradley, Hon. / L'hon. James J. (LIB)	St. Catharines	Minister of Transportation / Ministre des Transports
Broten, Hon. / L'hon. Laurel C. (LIB)	Etobicoke–Lakeshore	Minister of Children and Youth Services / Ministre des Services à l'enfance et à la jeunesse Minister Responsible for Women's Issues / Ministre déléguée à la Condition féminine
Brown, Michael A. (LIB)	Algoma–Manitoulin	
Brownell, Jim (LIB)	Stormont–Dundas–South Glengarry	
Cansfield, Hon. / L'hon. Donna H. (LIB)	Etobicoke Centre / Etobicoke-Centre	Minister of Natural Resources / Ministre des Richesses naturelles
Caplan, David (LIB)	Don Valley East / Don Valley-Est	
Carroll, Hon. / L'hon. M. Aileen (LIB)	Barrie	Minister of Culture / Ministre de la Culture Minister Responsible for Seniors / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires des personnes âgées
Chan, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Markham–Unionville	Minister of Citizenship and Immigration / Ministre des Affaires civiles et de l'Immigration
Chudleigh, Ted (PC)	Halton	
Colle, Mike (LIB)	Eglinton–Lawrence	
Craitor, Kim (LIB)	Niagara Falls	
Crozier, Bruce (LIB)	Essex	Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée Deputy Speaker / Vice-président
Delaney, Bob (LIB)	Mississauga–Streetsville	
Dhillon, Vic (LIB)	Brampton West / Brampton-Ouest	
Dickson, Joe (LIB)	Ajax–Pickering	
DiNovo, Cheri (NDP)	Parkdale–High Park	Second Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Deuxième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative
Dombrowsky, Hon. / L'hon. Leona (LIB)	Prince Edward–Hastings	Minister of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs / Ministre de l'Agriculture, de l'Alimentation et des Affaires rurales
Duguid, Hon. / L'hon. Brad (LIB)	Scarborough Centre / Scarborough-Centre	Minister of Aboriginal Affairs / Ministre des Affaires autochtones Deputy Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint du gouvernement
Duncan, Hon. / L'hon. Dwight (LIB)	Windsor–Tecumseh	Chair of the Management Board of Cabinet / Président du Conseil de gestion du gouvernement Minister of Finance / Ministre des Finances
Dunlop, Garfield (PC)	Simcoe North / Simcoe-Nord	
Elliott, Christine (PC)	Whitby–Oshawa	Deputy Leader, Official Opposition / Chef adjointe de l'opposition officielle

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Flynn, Kevin Daniel (LIB)	Oakville	
Fonseca, Hon. / L'hon. Peter (LIB)	Mississauga East–Cooksville / Mississauga-Est–Cooksville	Minister of Labour / Ministre du Travail
Gélinas, France (NDP)	Nickel Belt	
Gerretsen, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kingston and the Islands / Kingston et les Îles	Minister of the Environment / Ministre de l'Environnement
Gravelle, Hon. / L'hon. Michael (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Superior North / Thunder Bay–Superior-Nord	Minister of Northern Development, Mines and Forestry / Ministre du Développement du Nord, des Mines et des Forêts
Hampton, Howard (NDP)	Kenora–Rainy River	
Hardeman, Ernie (PC)	Oxford	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Hillier, Randy (PC)	Lanark–Frontenac–Lennox and Addington	
Horwath, Andrea (NDP)	Hamilton Centre / Hamilton-Centre	Leader, Recognized Party / Chef de parti reconnu Leader, New Democratic Party of Ontario / Chef du Nouveau parti démocratique de l'Ontario
Hoskins, Eric (LIB)	St. Paul's	
Hoy, Pat (LIB)	Chatham–Kent–Essex	
Hudak, Tim (PC)	Niagara West–Glanbrook / Niagara- Ouest–Glanbrook	Leader, Official Opposition / Chef de l'opposition officielle Leader, Progressive Conservative Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti progressiste-conservateur de l'Ontario
Jaczek, Helena (LIB)	Oak Ridges–Markham	
Jeffrey, Linda (LIB)	Brampton–Springdale	
Johnson, Rick (LIB)	Haliburton–Kawartha Lakes–Brock	
Jones, Sylvia (PC)	Dufferin–Caledon	
Klees, Frank (PC)	Newmarket–Aurora	
Kormos, Peter (NDP)	Welland	Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire de parti reconnu
Kular, Kuldip (LIB)	Bramalea–Gore–Malton	
Kwinter, Monte (LIB)	York Centre / York-Centre	
Lalonde, Jean-Marc (LIB)	Glengarry–Prescott–Russell	
Leal, Jeff (LIB)	Peterborough	
Levac, Dave (LIB)	Brant	
MacLeod, Lisa (PC)	Nepean–Carleton	
Mangat, Amrit (LIB)	Mississauga–Brampton South / Mississauga–Brampton-Sud	
Marchese, Rosario (NDP)	Trinity–Spadina	
Martiniuk, Gerry (PC)	Cambridge	
Matthews, Hon. / L'hon. Deborah (LIB)	London North Centre / London- Centre-Nord	Minister of Health and Long-Term Care / Ministre de la Santé et des Soins de longue durée
Mauro, Bill (LIB)	Thunder Bay–Atikokan	
McGuinty, Hon. / L'hon. Dalton (LIB)	Ottawa South / Ottawa-Sud	Minister of Intergovernmental Affairs / Ministre des Affaires intergouvernementales Premier / Premier ministre Leader, Liberal Party of Ontario / Chef du Parti libéral de l'Ontario Minister of Consumer Services / Ministre des Services aux consommateurs
McMeekin, Hon. / L'hon. Ted (LIB)	Ancaster–Dundas–Flamborough– Westdale	
McNeely, Phil (LIB)	Ottawa–Orléans	
Meilleur, Hon. / L'hon. Madeleine (LIB)	Ottawa–Vanier	Minister of Community and Social Services / Ministre des Services sociaux et communautaires Minister Responsible for Francophone Affairs / Ministre déléguée aux Affaires francophones
Miller, Norm (PC)	Parry Sound–Muskoka	
Miller, Paul (NDP)	Hamilton East–Stoney Creek / Hamilton-Est–Stoney Creek	
Milloy, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Kitchener Centre / Kitchener-Centre	Minister of Research and Innovation / Ministre de la Recherche et de l'Innovation Minister of Training, Colleges and Universities / Ministre de la Formation et des Collèges et Universités
Mitchell, Carol (LIB)	Huron–Bruce	
Moridi, Reza (LIB)	Richmond Hill	
Munro, Julia (PC)	York–Simcoe	Third Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Troisième vice-présidente du Comité plénier de l'Assemblée législative

Member and Party / Député(e) et parti	Constituency / Circonscription	Other responsibilities / Autres responsabilités
Murdoch, Bill (PC)	Bruce–Grey–Owen Sound	
Naqvi, Yasir (LIB)	Ottawa Centre / Ottawa-Centre	
O'Toole, John (PC)	Durham	
Oraziotti, David (LIB)	Sault Ste. Marie	
Ouellette, Jerry J. (PC)	Oshawa	
Pendergast, Leeanna (LIB)	Kitchener–Conestoga	
Peters, Hon. / L'hon. Steve (LIB)	Elgin–Middlesex–London	Speaker / Président de l'Assemblée législative
Phillips, Hon. / L'hon. Gerry (LIB)	Scarborough–Agincourt	Chair of Cabinet / Président du Conseil des ministres Minister Without Portfolio / Ministre sans portefeuille
Prue, Michael (NDP)	Beaches–East York	
Pupatello, Hon. / L'hon. Sandra (LIB)	Windsor West / Windsor-Ouest	Minister of Economic Development and Trade / Ministre du Développement économique et du Commerce
Qaadri, Shafiq (LIB)	Etobicoke North / Etobicoke-Nord	
Ramal, Khalil (LIB)	London–Fanshawe	
Ramsay, David (LIB)	Timiskaming–Cochrane	
Rinaldi, Lou (LIB)	Northumberland–Quinte West	
Runciman, Robert W. (PC)	Leeds–Grenville	Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire de l'opposition officielle
Ruprecht, Tony (LIB)	Davenport	
Sandals, Liz (LIB)	Guelph	
Savoline, Joyce (PC)	Burlington	
Sergio, Mario (LIB)	York West / York-Ouest	
Shurman, Peter (PC)	Thornhill	
Smith, Hon. / L'hon. Monique M. (LIB)	Nipissing	Minister of Tourism / Ministre du Tourisme Government House Leader / Leader parlementaire du gouvernement
Smitherman, Hon. / L'hon. George (LIB)	Toronto Centre / Toronto-Centre	Deputy Premier / Vice-premier ministre Minister of Energy and Infrastructure / Ministre de l'Énergie et de l'Infrastructure
Sorbara, Greg (LIB)	Vaughan	
Sousa, Charles (LIB)	Mississauga South / Mississauga-Sud	
Sterling, Norman W. (PC)	Carleton–Mississippi Mills	
Tabuns, Peter (NDP)	Toronto–Danforth	Deputy Third Party House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de parti reconnu
Takhar, Hon. / L'hon. Harinder S. (LIB)	Mississauga–Erindale	Minister of Government Services / Ministre des Services gouvernementaux
Van Bommel, Maria (LIB)	Lambton–Kent–Middlesex	
Watson, Hon. / L'hon. Jim (LIB)	Ottawa West–Nepean / Ottawa-Ouest–Nepean	Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing / Ministre des Affaires municipales et du Logement
Wilkinson, Hon. / L'hon. John (LIB)	Perth–Wellington	Minister of Revenue / Ministre du Revenu
Wilson, Jim (PC)	Simcoe–Grey	First Deputy Chair of the Committee of the Whole House / Premier vice-président du comité plénier de l'Assemblée
Witmer, Elizabeth (PC)	Kitchener–Waterloo	
Wynne, Hon. / L'hon. Kathleen O. (LIB)	Don Valley West / Don Valley-Ouest	Minister of Education / Ministre de l'Éducation
Yakabuski, John (PC)	Renfrew–Nipissing–Pembroke	Deputy Opposition House Leader / Leader parlementaire adjoint de l'opposition officielle
Zimmer, David (LIB)	Willowdale	

**STANDING AND SELECT COMMITTEES OF THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
COMITÉ PERMANENTS ET SPÉCIAUX DE L'ASSEMBLÉE LÉGISLATIVE**

Standing Committee on Estimates / Comité permanent des budgets des dépenses

Chair / Président: Garfield Dunlop
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Robert Bailey
Robert Bailey, Gilles Bisson
Jim Brownell, Kim Craiton
Bob Delaney, Garfield Dunlop
Phil McNeely, John O'Toole
Khalil Ramal
Clerks / Greffiers: William Short (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Finance and Economic Affairs / Comité permanent des finances et des affaires économiques

Chair / Président: Pat Hoy
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Laura Albanese
Laura Albanese, Wayne Arthurs
Toby Barrett, Kevin Daniel Flynn
Eric Hoskins, Pat Hoy
Michael Prue, Peter Shurman
Charles Sousa
Committee Clerk / Greffier: William Short

Standing Committee on General Government / Comité permanent des affaires gouvernementales

Chair / Président: David Orazietti
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Helena Jaczek
Helena Jaczek, Kuldeep Kular
Amrit Mangat, Rosario Marchese
Bill Mauro, Reza Moridi
David Orazietti, Joyce Savoline
John Yakabuski
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Trevor Day

Standing Committee on Government Agencies / Comité permanent des organismes gouvernementaux

Chair / Président: Ernie Hardeman
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Lisa MacLeod
Laura Albanese, Michael A. Brown
Howard Hampton, Ernie Hardeman
Rick Johnson, Lisa MacLeod
Yasir Naqvi, Leeanna Pendergast
Jim Wilson
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Douglas Arnott

Standing Committee on Justice Policy / Comité permanent de la justice

Chair / Président: Lorenzo Berardinetti
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Jeff Leal
Lorenzo Berardinetti, Ted Chudleigh
Christine Elliott, Peter Kormos
Jeff Leal, Dave Levac
Leeanna Pendergast, Lou Rinaldi
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Susan Sourial

Standing Committee on the Legislative Assembly / Comité permanent de l'Assemblée législative

Chair / Président: Bas Balkissoon
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Khalil Ramal
Bas Balkissoon, Jim Brownell
Bob Delaney, Joe Dickson
Rick Johnson, Sylvia Jones
Norm Miller, Khalil Ramal
Peter Tabuns
Committee Clerk / Greffière: Tonia Grannum

Standing Committee on Public Accounts / Comité permanent des comptes publics

Chair / Président: Norman W. Sterling
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Ted Arnott
Ted Arnott, France Gélinas
Phil McNeely, Jerry J. Ouellette
David Ramsay, Liz Sandals
Norman W. Sterling, Maria Van Bommel
David Zimmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Standing Committee on Regulations and Private Bills / Comité permanent des règlements et des projets de loi d'intérêt privé

Chair / Président: Michael Prue
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Paul Miller
Bas Balkissoon, Mike Colle
Kim Craiton, Gerry Martiniuk
Paul Miller, Bill Murdoch
Michael Prue, Tony Ruprecht
Mario Sergio
Clerks / Greffiers: Trevor Day (pro tem.), Sylwia Przedziecki

Standing Committee on Social Policy / Comité permanent de la politique sociale

Chair / Président: Shafiq Qaadri
Vice-Chair / Vice-président: Vic Dhillon
Sophia Aggelonitis, Vic Dhillon
Cheri DiNovo, Linda Jeffrey
Sylvia Jones, Jean-Marc Lalonde
Carol Mitchell, Shafiq Qaadri
Elizabeth Witmer
Committee Clerk / Greffier: Katch Koch

Select Committee on Mental Health and Addictions / Comité spécial de la santé mentale et des dépendances

Chair / Président: Kevin Daniel Flynn
Vice-Chair / Vice-présidente: Christine Elliott
Bas Balkissoon, Christine Elliott
Kevin Daniel Flynn, France Gélinas
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